

PORTRAIT OF NEW YORK



Portrait of
NEW YORK

BY
CECIL BEATON



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To
Mona
With
Love

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PREFACE

I HAVE attempted to bring this book up to date, but I fear the reader will find here little of history, economics, politics or religion. If he is in search of information about the memorial to an Amiable Child, or the Fraunces Tavern, he will find it in an excellent volume to be purchased for thirty cents on the one hundred and second floor of the Empire State Building. My book is far from complete. It is less a guide-book than a catalogue of impressions, mostly visual, of a city that, with each visit, becomes, for me, ever more beguiling, mysterious and impressive.

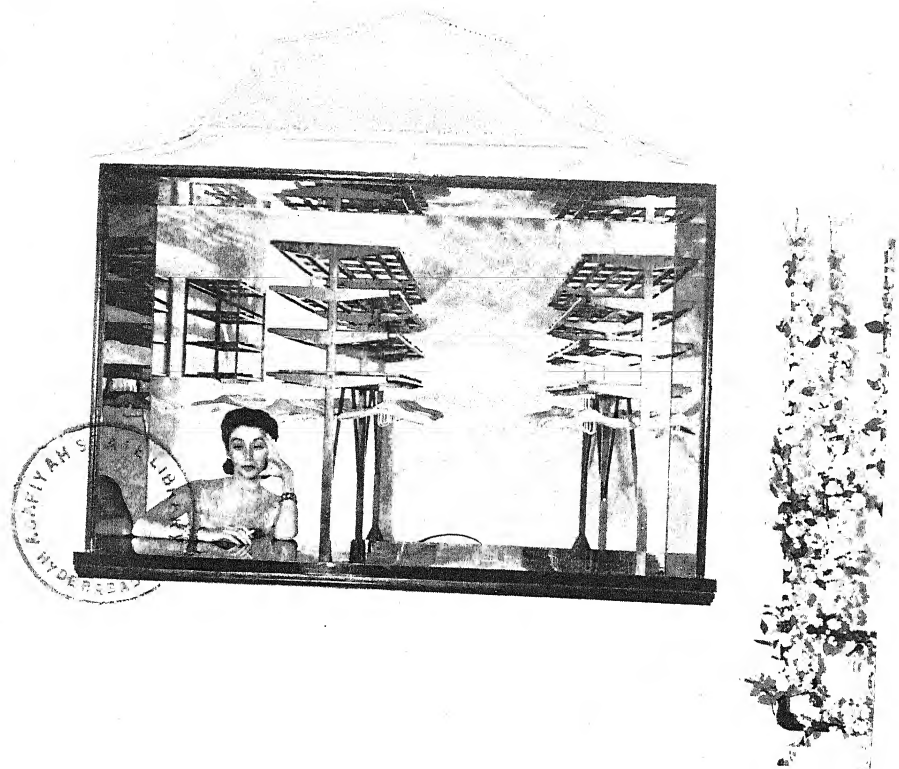
For their help in the preparation of these pages, I should like to thank Mr. Ivan Moffat for his stories and impressions, Mr. Waldemar Hansen and Mr. Charles Henri Ford for much interesting information and for their enthusiasm on our sightseeing expeditions, Miss Edith Olivier for her advice and energy with scissors, Mr. Charles Fry and Mr. Brian Cook Batsford for laying-out the pages, and the authors of those books and articles which have directed me to discover hitherto unknown aspects of the city.

C. B.

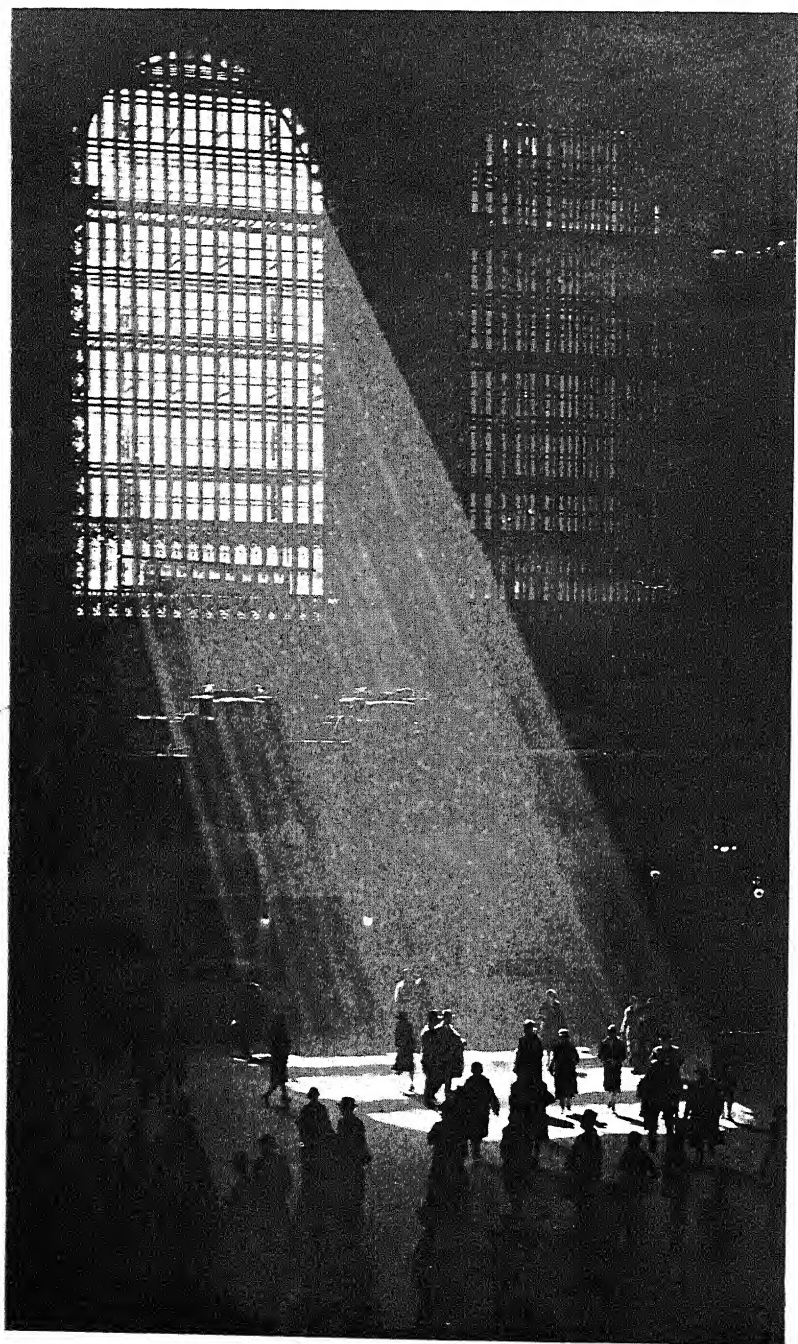
NEW YORK,
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CONTENTS

PREFACE	<i>page</i> vii
I. AROUND THE CLOCK	1
II. LONG-SHOT AND CLOSE-UP	7
III. THE NEW YORK ANIMAL	12
IV. MECHANICS OF EVERYDAY	34
V. CIVIC SCENIC	57
VI. UNCONDUCTED TOURS	79
VII. THE ENTERTAINMENT WORLD AND CULTURAL SCENE	111
VIII. LAST STRETCH	128
INDEX	133



HAT CHECK GIRL



I

AROUND THE CLOCK

I

It is early morning. In the harbour ferry-boats are sounding their whistles, tramp steamers are moving, carrying produce from the corners of the world: coffee from Brazil, bananas from Costa Rica, tea from Ceylon. Trains are arriving at the railroad stations from throughout the vast semi-continent. The silhouettes of the skyscrapers, a silent army of man-made stalagmites, soar into the ultramarine sky. The moon is still brilliant. The street lights and a few recalcitrant neon signs burn on, while the night-workers return home.

Downtown, on the western side of the island, the streets are already humming with activity. While the rest of the metropolis sleeps, in the great Washington Market, and in the Fulton fish markets, the largest food distribution centres in the city, a phrenetic activity of trucking and shipping has started. Jobbers are selling to wholesalers and retailers. Freight cars are emptied of their contents. Produce is moved, crated and stored. Truck-drivers, farmers, tally-keepers and inspectors work beneath an uncanny spluttering of lights. Fruit, vegetables and poultry are stacked in wholesale quantities. Mountains of shining fish, glistening in the moonlight, are being dispersed by workers who look like men from Mars in their regalia of mask and rubber suits. The work continues through the pre-dawn hours.

In uptown Manhattan the floor shows are being presented for the last time in half a dozen night-clubs.

II

Alarm clocks are now ringing in Chelsea, in Greenwich Village, in the Bronx and Queens, in the identical houses, which continue row upon monotonous row to infinity.

Humanity rises from its bed. Poverty awakes in the slums. The sleepers in the "hot beds" in Harlem are being shaken to life: they must vacate the beds which have been rented only for an eight-hour shift and are again in demand. In the venerable tenement houses,

which occupy three-quarters of Manhattan's residential space, the Jew and the Spaniard, the Italian and the Irishman, are pulling the grey sheets over their heads, delaying the encounter with the reality of another day.

It is after eight o'clock. The subways are crowded with people hanging on to straps as they read their morning papers undeterred by the violent rocking of the trains. These hurtle through the underground tubes which disgorge their population at Times Square, at Chambers and Wall Street. Manhattan, with its canyoned streets, its subways tunnelling the ground, and its elevated trains above the ground, is a gigantic ant-hill, through which daily passes a ceaseless traffic of human freight. Transportation facilities to and from this metropolis include over three hundred motor-truck lines, and ten great trunk-line railroads. Access by water is provided by two hundred and eighty-five miles of developed water-frontage, including eighteen hundred piers, wharves and bulk-heads.

Statistics vary, increase with the years. To-day New York City has almost eight million people, crowded into an area of three hundred and twenty-three square miles. The population splits itself into seven million white people, half a million negroes, and nineteen or twenty thousand Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Eskimos, Polynesians, *et al.* In Manhattan alone, the people use five hundred and forty-five million gallons of water every twenty-four hours. In the course of a year, they consume almost three billion kilowatt-hours of electricity and twenty-one billion cubic feet of gas. A million telephones are in operation each day. On this island, twelve miles long and two miles wide, and in its surrounding boroughs, Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, Richmond, there are each year sixteen births for every thousand of the population, half as many marriages as births, and one per cent of the population dies off. Over two hundred people are murdered yearly, twelve thousand felonies are committed, and the total of crimes, including driving through a red light, approaches half a million. To offset criminality, fifteen thousand men on the police force cost the city upwards of seventy million dollars yearly.

New York's import business every year runs to two billion dollars and its exports to one billion. Domestic water-borne commerce exceeds five billion dollars. A quarter of a million people visit the

city daily for its buying facilities, for New York manages a tenth of the retail business of the country.

The greatest single industry of which New York boasts is the clothing business, worth a billion and a half dollars yearly. Printing, food, beverages, furs, confections, wood-products, textiles, chemicals, glass and paper are its other great industries. Ship-building is a major concern in the Brooklyn Navy Yards.

Over three million workers are needed for this multiplicity of activity. The density of the population of New York, with one hundred and four thousand two hundred residents per square mile, surpasses even that of Shanghai. The New Yorker must be carried ten or twelve miles in order to be buried, and this is only one more means of transportation, for the New Yorker never walks.

III

By mid-morning "Maine Central is up to forty-eight". The typist moans "These shoes are murdering me", as she slips off her cheap pumps, wriggles her toes, inhales cigarette smoke and desultorily pecks at the keyboard of her typewriter. The housewives are busy shopping for food, household utensils and nylon stockings.

In Herald Square, at Macy's, at other large department stores, the escalators carry a continuous stream of shoppers in search of anything from safety-pins to a diamond necklace.

Along 14th Street, the "poor man's Fifth Avenue", the East Side housewives are in search of the bargains that the frank advertising announces. At the corner of 14th and Broadway, beneath fluorescent lights in a window display one flight up, a number of dummies are dressed in fur coats. In and out of these manikins, pacing up and down all day long, winter and summer, several tired but real-life, models also display the latest fur coats as they chew gum or gesticulate to an occasional friend in the street below.

Off Fifth Avenue, on 28th Street, weary from walking and watching the pounding and pushing life of the city, we enter the small church of St. Leo's. The noise and hurry are suddenly forgotten. There are two nuns in green and white habits, kneeling at the altar, night and day, year in and year out. They are the *religieuses* of the neighbouring convent who maintain the perpetual adoration of Christ.

In half a million rooming houses, the later risers are being called by their landladies. The boy who wanted to be an actor, and is now a soda jerker on the "four to twelve" shift in a chain drug-store, opens the slats of the venetian blinds.

The city's fifteen hundred clinics are receiving their continual stream of morning visitors; wounds and more wounds. In the hundred and thirty-odd hospitals the patients are settled down to their morning boredom. In the convalescent homes they are gazing at chrysanthemums in vases and fast fading yellow roses.

At noon the tall buildings disgorge their occupants, as thousands hurry to their habitual drug-store, cafeteria or restaurant for a sandwich, a cup of coffee and a cigarette.

Just south of Pennsylvania Station, in the centre of the women's garment industry, young men named "feather-horses" carry on hangers, held high, like banners in a religious procession, racks of flowered cretonnes or flimsy silks and, blowing in the wind, hundreds of fur stoles. Fur collars of every colour are followed by white collars as crisp as pastry frills. On trolleys, uniform overcoats are followed by a drift of evening dresses. So dense is the throng that special regulations have to be made for up- and downtown pedestrian traffic.

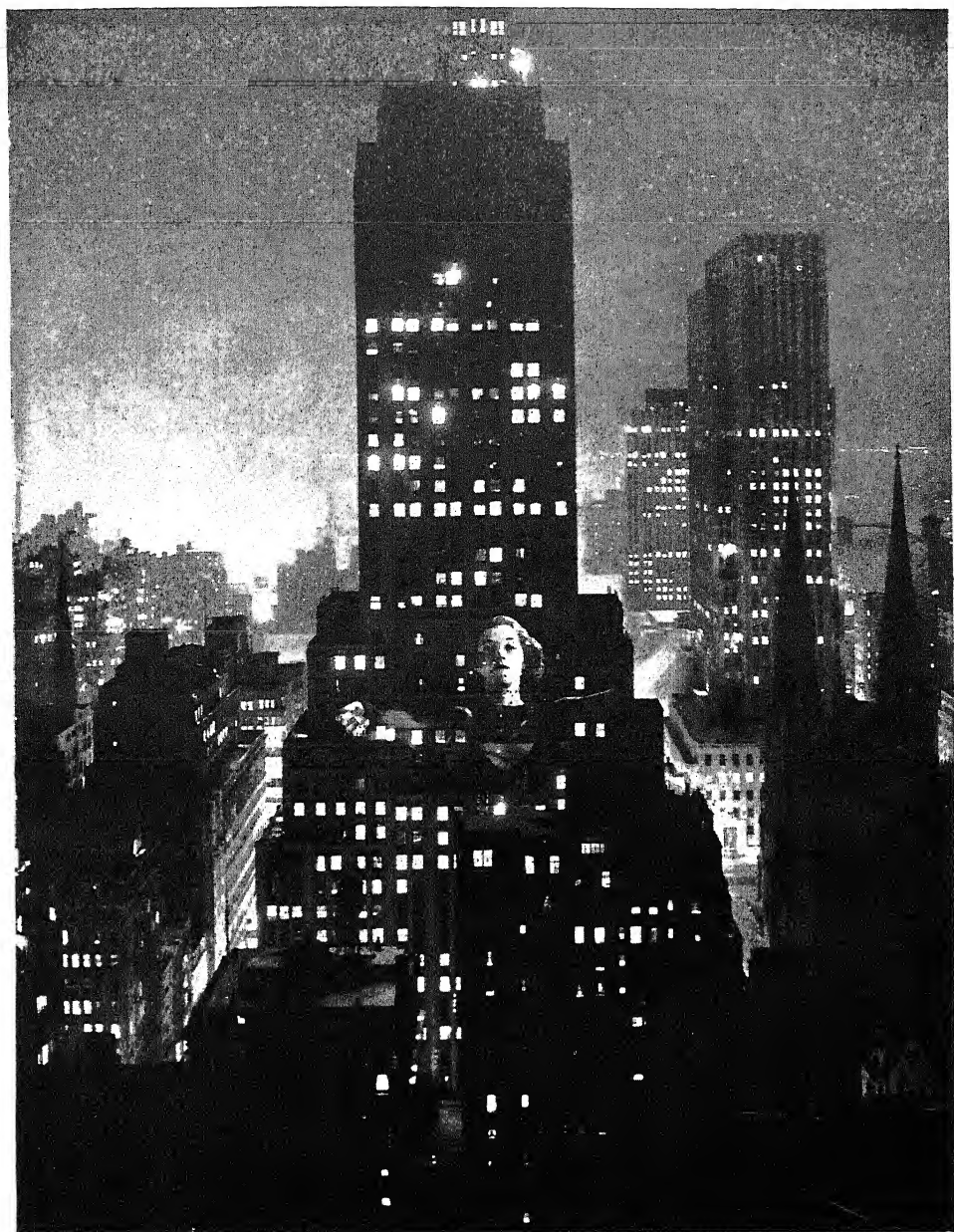
Various branches of the garment trade have their favourite streets in which to spend the lunch hour. One is the haunt of the basters, another of the cutters, yet another of the stitchers.

At the fashionable restaurants, uptown and downtown business executives pay for one meal more than their stenographers do for a whole week's lunches.

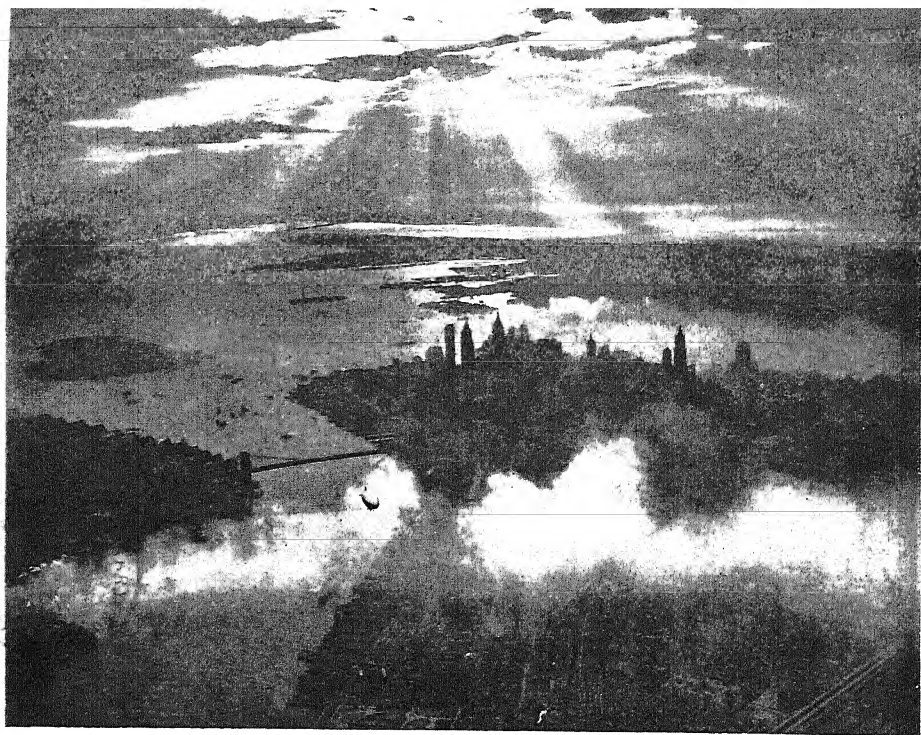
IV

By afternoon the city has settled down to a quiet roar. Traffic is at a standstill in the busiest thoroughfares. Policemen with shrill whistles use their own initiative to unravel the tangle of buses, lorries and taxis.

At Sharpe and Dohme's and at the New York Post-Graduate Hospital, those who have fallen to the bottom of the scale are reduced to selling their blood at five dollars a pint. Many of these unfortunates are recovering from drunken bouts and because of their poor physical condition their offers are refused. They are allowed to give



NEW YORK MIRAGE



MANHATTAN FROM THE AIR





rose-red. New York at night is riddled with lights. In the blaze of midnight the moon is given no chance. There is little risk of stumbling in the dark on returning to the apartment house, for electricity, that second sun, extends the day to include the pursuit of pleasure.

Taxis are throbbing in the west forties, carrying their impatient theatre-goers. Along Broadway, movie palaces advertise their "first run showing" with huge neon "spectaculars". Times Square cinema houses attract crowds with their cheap prices for second and third run movies. In the shooting galleries and amusement centres sailors are busy trying their luck at games of chance. Microphones in front of dance palaces blare swing music, and the signs boast: "Fifty lovely hostesses—Fifty." Young women with heavily painted faces stand in the doorways, holding erotically elliptic conversations with soldiers or Italian boys dressed eloquently with narrow pant cuffs, wide knees and padded shoulders. At Broadway and Forty-second, all forms of sex are invited with frank eyes.

In the bars and night-clubs, the drinking continues. In an uptown bar, two veterans sit drinking beer. They are studying, under the G.I. bill of rights, at Columbia University. One says to the other: "Oh, no, let me pay for it. My wife makes more than yours does."

At Union Square, and up at Columbus Circle, the sidewalk orators, Communists, Trotskyites and other partisans are vehemently discussing the social issues of the moment.

In summer, Central Park will be open until the midnight curfew. Lovers are embracing on the benches in the more shadowy paths.

In the lighted window, down some side-streets, the muted click of a typewriter is heard. Who is the unknown person avoiding the temptations of the New York night to work on a play or a novel?

It is early morning again. In uptown Manhattan, floor-shows are going on for the last time in half a dozen night-clubs. In the harbour, ferry-boats are sounding their whistles and tramp steamers are moving.

II

LONG-SHOT AND CLOSE-UP

I

THE beauty of London lies hidden in lonely squares, in unexpected corners of the City, in the Temple, in Chelsea, or Westminster. But New York is seen at its best in the distance, as from the approaching liner, when the clusters of shining, metallic buildings, as tall as and taller than the Eiffel Tower, seem to rise like ascending fountains of beauty.

The liner moves slowly up the broad Hudson River, accompanied by a plaintive choir of gulls floating on motionless wings, until mournful sirens startle them. The Statue of Liberty slips slowly by, that *demodé* but magnificent matron, coppery green, like the door-knobs of ancient country greenhouses. The smooth water, cut by the ship's bows, and the impersonal pageant of passing ships, seem to belong as much to eternity as to a desolate region where mountains lie still for centuries.

Two groups of skyscrapers—the Downtown business section and the Midtown residential section of Gotham—appear unrelated to utility. On a misty day, the towers will gradually fade and vanish before your eyes, giving further testimony to their aspect of unreality. They seem to be some romantic fantasy, specifically calculated to create an emotional effect. They are like mythical Baghdad, and, indeed, Mr. O. Henry has referred to New York City as “Baghdad-on-the-subway”. A more realistic Chicago architect described Manhattan as an “asparagus bed” with its sword-like shoots springing from the dense population and the fertile manure of wealth.

Railway ferries, old and grey, laden with goods, rolling stock and passengers, are the first contact with the daily routine of a continent. They bear unfamiliar names—“Chesapeake”, “Baltimore and Ohio Railway”, “Erie”—painted in old-fashioned letters of dingy gilt. The stevedores shout as they work—in English, which seems incongruous in such a scene. The incongruity becomes more striking the more one sees of America, for everything is so utterly foreign. English

strangers become more home-sick than it would have been thought possible in any English-speaking country.

The contrast between that glittering mass of steel and concrete towers and these dingy grey giants of ferry-boats is no accident. The ferries are vestigial evidence of the financial struggles that were waged in that same Wall Street from which those fairy turrets, memorials to successful commerce, now rise. The Erie Railroad, fought over by Jay Gould and a Vanderbilt in one of history's most corrupt financial struggles, at once symbolizes the ugly, competitive industrialism and the wealth which forced those towers so high. The ferries may be abysmal, but the offices of their controllers are celestial.

The propellers churn the dirty water as they reverse. A band plays the "Star Spangled Banner". The liner slides to her berth.

II

A first and lasting impression is that New York appears to be a great city in a great hurry. Criticism is at first silenced by the superficial sparkle and vivacity of the place. The average street pace must surely be forty miles an hour. The traffic lights switch straight from red to green and green to red, without any nonsense about orange, symbolizing the harshness of contrast that dispenses with the intermediary things that Europeans respect. It is usually unwise to cross the road, except in accordance with the green light. Even dogs are said to understand this symbol. In this respect they seem to be more wary than the New Yorkers, for I have often noticed people, but never dogs, crossing against the light, weaving in and out of moving cars with suicidal abandon, simply to save a few seconds' time. Americans always know their cue; they even anticipate it: the drivers mysteriously know when to throw in the gear just before the light goes green.

Traffic regulation is simplified by the parallel series of equally spaced avenues and streets, intersecting at right angles, throughout the city. The ground plan of Manhattan Island can never change. Those immovable parallelograms will for ever perpetuate the town-planning of its founder, Gouverneur Morris. Broadway alone interrupts the symmetry, as if the architect had suddenly become careless and allowed his ruler to slip: this great thoroughfare creates a diagonal gash across the city.





SURFACE SHADOWS

It has been said the skyline is forever changing. After the financial crisis of 1929, it was considered that the days of bigger and better skyscrapers were over; only in respect of residential buildings is this partly true. Although the building ceased during the most recent war, New York has once more begun to rebuild. It is a city that will never be complete. Streets are pulled up, groups of houses ruthlessly torn down, entire new areas constructed.

The Empire State, the tallest building in the world, and the George Washington Bridge, which spans the Hudson River, were completed in 1931. In the next year, ten of the fourteen buildings of the Rockefeller Centre were completed.

The Triborough Bridge, costing sixty million dollars, linking Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx by a series of viaducts, ramps and depressed roadways, was opened in 1936. During the same year, the squalid districts on the east waterfront were landscaped to become the East River Drive; this drive now extends from the Battery, at the lower part of Manhattan Island, to 125th Street, where it connects with the Triborough Bridge. Also in 1936, on the west side along the Hudson River, the Express Elevated Highway was opened (starting on Canal Street, continuing to West 72nd Street), and the immaculate Henry Hudson Parkway.

While some of these huge enterprises were conceived before his time of office, their final completion and success were largely due to the vision and the determination of Commissioner Robert Moses, whose other public-spirited contributions include the Jones Beach, Long Island project, the finest public beach in the world, and the Southern State Parkway which leads to it.

No bombs fell on New York City in the course of the war, but its post-bellum period is full of change and decay. The buildings need cleaning, the houses repainting. The stone walls of the Public Library on 42nd Street were recently rejuvenated with steam scrubbing, but that is an isolated example of what must be done generally. The life of a building is thirty years—wear, tear and breakdown. It is sad that an economy which can do so much in the way of construction still allows to flourish, row on row, street on street, the gaping and eyeless poverty of the Lower East Side, Spanish Harlem, the Bowery, Little Italy, and that most shamefully neglected section of all, Harlem. Much of residential Manhattan

is ugly, a painful reminder of more than casual poverty in a wealthy nation.

The housing shortage created by the war, and the pressure of groups of returned soldiers, has brought about some rebuilding of the sordid tenement areas. The old Gas-house district on the East Side is being torn down. A group of buildings, to be known as Peter Cooper Village, now occupies the territory. Co-operative housing projects will transform some of the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Slowly, New York's residential problem is being solved, though not at the rate of industrial and traffic construction.

III

New York is a city of perspectives. They are as clearly visualized as is the miniature Palladian theatre at Vicenza. In the clear atmosphere and brilliant light the distances are as sharp as the foreground.

The streets in the business sections, and even in some residential areas, are straight tunnels beneath mountainous buildings. With their metal kerbs and tarmac or concrete surfaces, they reverberate with a noise that is unlike that of any other city. The sidewalk on Park Avenue at any point within several blocks of Grand Central Station is constantly vibrating sympathetically with the trains moving underground from the railroad station. The whole city quivers with a universal vibration, and it has been said that "even inanimate objects of art, in hushed museums, move slowly across their shelves in the course of the year". The apartment blocks are often made of Manitoba marble or Portland cement, though, functionally, with the Bessemer steel process, these walls are superfluous. Wood is forbidden, even for decoration.

Throughout the day, the same group of buildings are transformed by the varied effects of light. The shadow thrown from one skyscraper on to another has the sharp quality of the steel hidden beneath the marble casing. It is startlingly dramatic. Some of the East Side streets resemble paintings of the early Di Chirico period, with the long line of tenements in perspective and the strange shapes and colour of the buildings themselves producing a curious melancholy.

In winter there is so much static electricity charging the air that sudden contact with the door-handle or telephone creates a flash. As you stoop to smell a lily a spark will emanate from its pistil.

When, eventually, for lack of better things to do, and because of this past bedtime, you fall asleep, it is without dozing, with no state of semi-consciousness; when the counterpane slips off the bed, crackling and sparking as it falls, you wake with equal speed and decisiveness.

To open the window is to be startled by the roar of the city below. The quick descent to the ground floor in the elevator, with the singing in your ears, is like landing from an aeroplane. It helps somewhat to gulp and blow your nose.

It is difficult to find your way about the streets. Although the lay-out of Manhattan is pleasantly simple, there are few signs to help the stranger discover whether he is "East" or "West" of Fifth Avenue, from which the East-and-West system of numbering street-houses begins. And he will often walk a block out of his way to discover that he is heading downtown instead of uptown. In London it is difficult to miss the Underground station, or fail to be conscious of the "Ladies" and "Gentlemen". In New York it is only possible to find the dark green stairways, unobtrusively leading to the Subway railway, after they have been pointed out. To travel by underground is often hopelessly confusing. One ends by taking buses, or walking innumerable miles. Only the New Yorker can trot his way skilfully about the subterranean travel routes. The post office is not marked, and I have yet to discover a sign indicating a public lavatory.

In England an awning is reserved for a wedding or a party. Here it would appear that many apartment houses are in a festive mood, until closer inspection reveals that even some of the "flophouses", with "Bed for 25 cents" boast awnings, and that bums as well as brides are treated to this extra shelter from the elements.

III

THE NEW YORK ANIMAL

I

WHEREVER the stranger goes in New York he will find people who really seem glad to meet him, and the appearance of rush is readily interrupted by the slightest excuse for showing hospitality.

Americans are more common in London than Englishmen are in New York. Since a visit to America is beyond the means of the post-war tourist, most English visitors to New York are people arriving in the interests of big business or politics. Thus to Americans the "English" accent invariably means the "Oxford" accent, which, in fact, only represents a minute percentage of the upper class of the entire English population. There are numberless Americans passing through London who are by no means of the same social standing or importance as the average Englishman in New York. Although before the war seventy-eight thousand Englishmen lived in New York, an unknown or untitled Englishman (the terms are synonymous in New York) still warrants a greater interest than any other stranger. "English Colonial Houses", "English Tea-rooms" and English butlers are at a premium.

London, of all capitals, is least cordial to foreigners. In New York, restaurateurs and hotel managers effervesce at the appearance of an Englishman among their patrons, for he is established in their estimation before they have seen his pocket-book. The opposite is true of London. So an Englishman must not try to gauge his effect upon Americans in terms of the effect of Americans upon him.

We know that to be English in many continental cities is an advantage often accompanied by exaggerated prices in hotels, restaurants and shops. In New York, visitors from England will not find this the case: neither need they be embarrassed by their accent, for it provokes more admiration, or pure amusement, than hostility. New Yorkers are surprised by the Englishman's habit of understatement and quiet humour, receiving it with wide-eyed wonder and bewilderment.



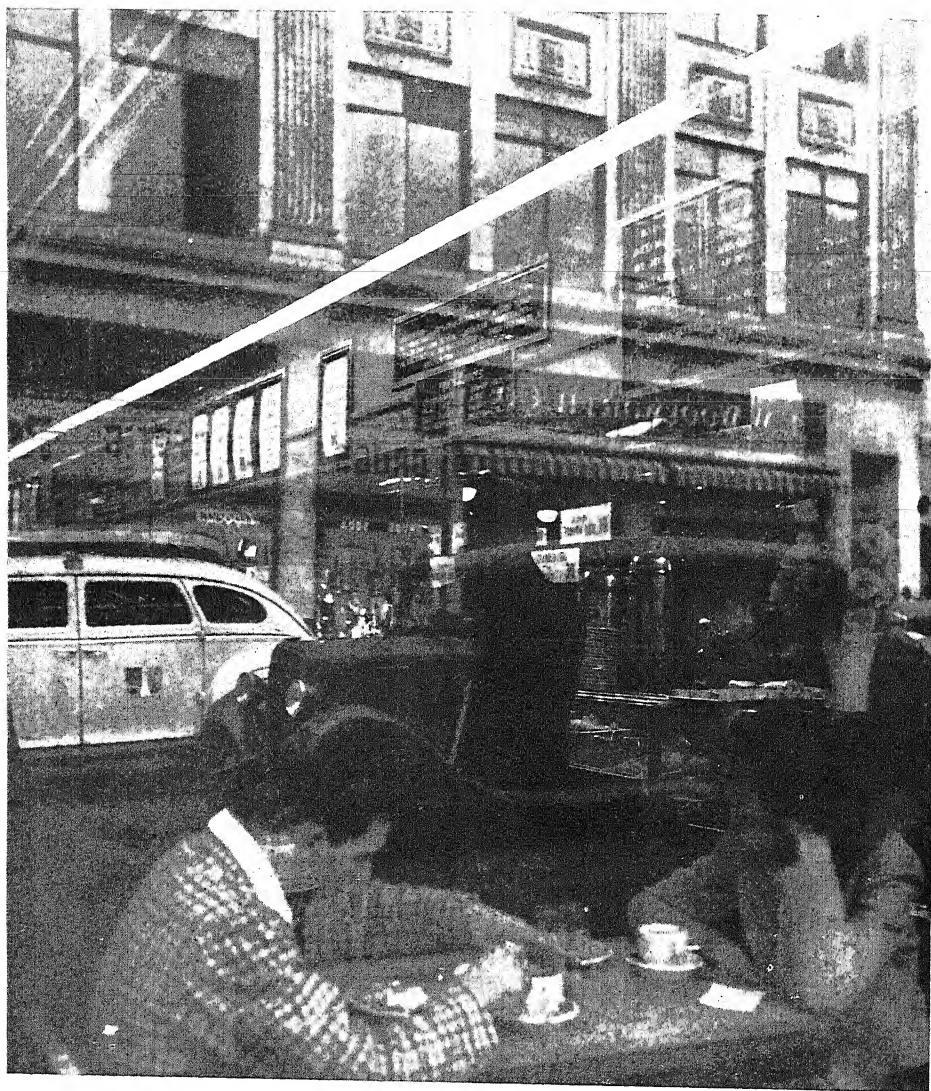
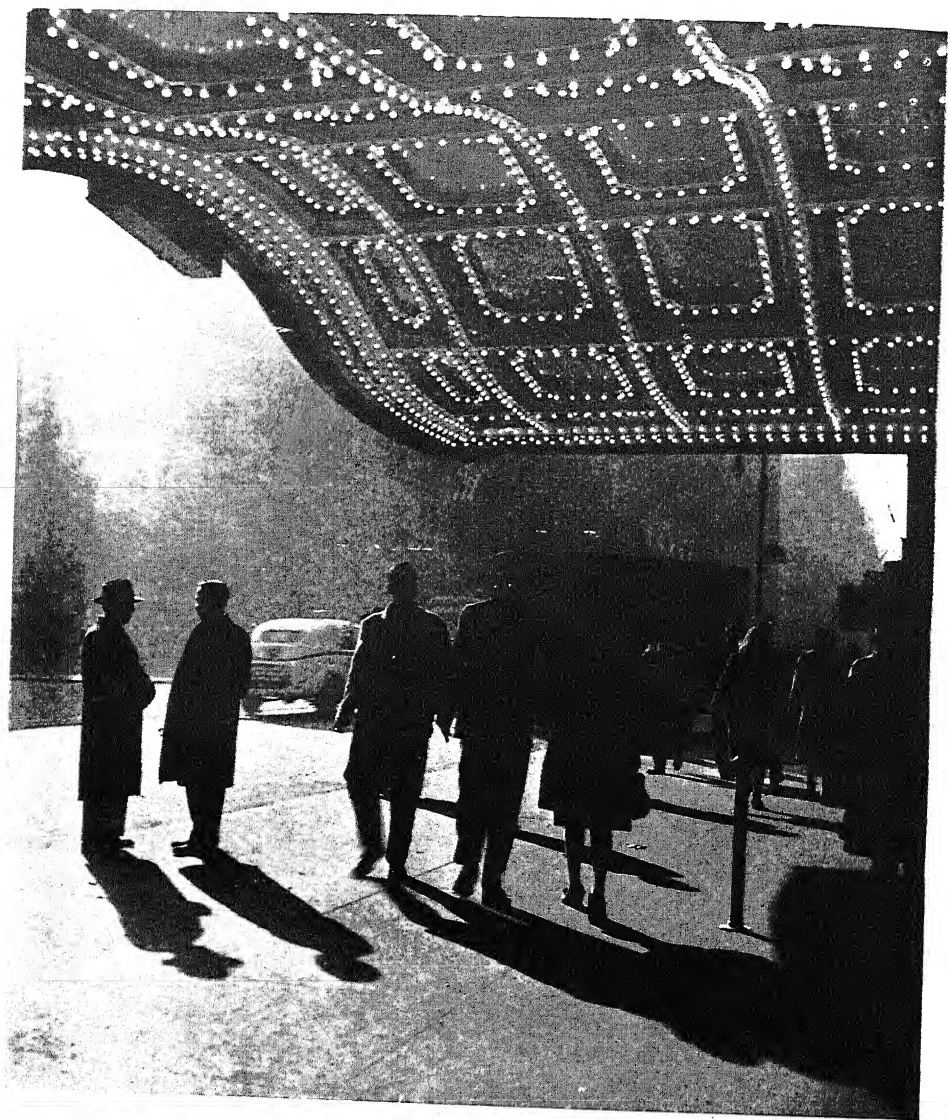


PLATE GLASS REFLECTIONS



MURRAY HILL HOTEL AND HOSPITAL



BROADWAY SIDEWALK

Americans seem to enjoy watching Englishmen in buses, fumbling disdainfully for change, or asking how much the fare is to Fifty-fifth Street, shopping clumsily, saying "Thank you" interminably, or asking the way politely: "I say, could you possibly be so kind as to . . .?"

The New Yorker's attitude to English people is half-mocking and half-admiring. Many think them "quaint" because of their dignity and haughty voices, but with any encouragement, the "hail-fellow" familiarity of policemen, doormen, liftmen and waiters will be lavished as graciously upon an English lord as it would be upon any guy on the side-walks along Broadway.

Few Americans realize the romance and glamour which they possess in the eyes of their English visitors.

The working people, believing in equality but under financial obligations to the wealthy, have developed a back-chatting technique which is the only compromise possible. Thus, it is difficult to be really friendly with the taxi-driver or electrician; at best, a facetious wise-cracking relationship will develop. In Europe, the friendliness between landlord and tenant often assumes the nature of family life.

II

The legendary New Yorker is an extraordinary animal. He presents the paradox of being at one and the same time uniquely individual, and yet a part of some strange basic pattern. A casual observer might think that all New Yorkers are stamped from the same die. Closer observation would reveal the paradox.

He runs up escalators. Violently he knocks people down to pull open the closing doors of an underground train, unwilling to await the train that will be along a few minutes later. He leaves the underground five steps at a time, spins his life like a top by crossing the street against the light to save another minute, and then he stands for an hour on the other side, watching excavators at work on the site of a new building. He is cold-blooded and unsentimental, and will walk past a man lying on the sidewalk, scarcely caring whether the man is drunk or dead; in the next block he will drop a dime in the tambourine of a pan-handler. He enjoys gossip of all varieties, is an inveterate reader of the tabloid newspapers, and knows intimately the morbid murder cases. He welcomes news oddities, gleans

romance from the man who swung, like Tarzan, under the girders of the Triborough Bridge, has sympathy for the husband who stands on his head to regain the affection of his wife, and is awe-inspired by the Italian boy who saw a vision of the Virgin Mary in a vacant lot in the Bronx; he even makes a visit to the place, now marked by a shrine. In slang parlance, he is still, in spite of his sophisticated knowledge of the "phonies", a "sucker". He is sociable and for-gathers on the sidewalks around Union Square and Columbus Circle to discuss the social and political questions of the day. He is loyal to his party, is an active member of his union, and, at heart, is antipathetic to the "bosses". Yet constantly he talks about building a bungalow on Long Island, and strives to attain a bourgeois status. He often goes to night school, or takes up study on his own, and has a true desire for advancement. The New Yorker likes to make "appointments" for business, for cocktails, for anything. Here his formal side reveals itself, and distinguishes him from the American provincial, who has no sense of style in "appointments".

Also he loves to talk. Personal contacts in business are more popular in New York than in London. The slightest transaction calls for personal interviews, which consist of lunches, drinks and chain cigarettes. The theory, often held in England, that personal characteristics should enter as little as possible into business relationships is not accepted here, where part of the fun is "putting personality across". An extension of the "personal" idea in business is the existence of numerous business clubs and societies where the "boys" back-slap, crack jokes and drink or eat at "Get Acquainted" tables, all subject to the overlord of commercial necessity.

New Yorkers have a relish for gambling. The horse-racing track at Jamaica, Long Island, in 1945, had an intake of four hundred and forty-four and a half million dollars, of which the New York State racing tax took approximately thirty-two and a half million. On the hundred and fifty or sixty-odd racing days in a year, the Long Island trains to Jamaica are packed daily with New Yorkers out to make a million, as the legendary Pittsburgh Phil once did. There are the housewives out to "make a few fifty-cent bets" by pooling their resources, five or six of them betting on the same horse. At five o'clock they will rush home in time to warm up a can of beans for their unsuspecting husbands. There are heavy Broadway "sharppers",

flashily dressed, picking their teeth and studying their racing forms on the hour journey to the track. There are touts, who have "systems" and "sure winners" to sell to the crowd at a nominal fee. Every year the money tills at Jamaica have unclaimed winnings totalling over half a million dollars, with the result that now the racing commission has taken it upon itself to inform all bettors of their gains.

Gambling in New York State is illegal outside of New York City, but here the "numbers" racket, roulette, the slot machines, dice, cards, fan-tan games, bridge and gin rummy have immense popularity. Fan-tan is played among the Chinese, who, strangely enough, are ashamed of gambling, and pursue their betting destinies in obscure and innocent houses in Brooklyn or the Bronx, far from their native Chinatown in the Bowery. A recent fan-tan case, brought to court, revealed that one Chinese had bet ten thousand dollars, his life's earnings, on a single turn of the game.

III

Only when comparisons are made with pre-war standards is the full change in New York life to-day realized: the literature of the 'thirties is out-dated; the glitter is somewhat tarnished; the tempo, perhaps due to the effort to express it in new terms, is slower. But there is a basic dynamic pattern which has not changed, and a twenty-four-hour sweep of the clock to-day or yesterday is much the same in its multifold events, repeated in endless continuum as long as the city shall stand.

The Second World War has left a more deadly mark on Americans than that of World War I, for the stakes were bigger, the instruments of destruction more terrifying, and the moral values involved far greater. In the wake of the terrible disaster, made staggeringly inhuman by the advent of "block-busters", saturation bombing, and the atomic bomb, there has arisen an enormous restlessness, a neurotic, zigzag pendulum of living. Values are impermanent, not only the mundane values, such as the price of sugar, but the spiritual and moral values of a whole generation. It is an ironic tribute to the fluctuation of such material values as food availability and the lack of housing that they contribute to the larger sense of instability and violent uncertainty, the American's coming to grips with his nebulous and immortal soul. In a superficial sense, the edge has been taken off

the glamour that once was New York City. The leisure classes have been affected by the high taxes, and are no longer living by their pre-war standards of elegance. The entertainment-makers are wary of investments. Everywhere the war uprooted aggressions and neurotic impulses, and everyone is faced with the plight of the road back to individual meaning and morality. We have reached perhaps the highest point of uncertainty in the transitional age in which we live. Inevitably, in a transitional age, people gainsay life, and the old question, "What is the meaning of it all?" comes up for a conscientious re-examination. The seemingly indifferent and happy-go-lucky attitude of some Americans frequently covers an inner, more serious self. One discovers that many have an instinct in sensing a bad deal. The New Yorkers' lack of interest in the arrival of the delegates of the United Nations Assembly might be less a sign of shocking indifference than an overwhelming fear as the organization hovers so hesitantly upon the threshold of a true solution to the world's problems.

New York has changed. But change is the root of progress, and an optimistic view of the movement of history is not wholly incompatible with present historical facts.

The younger generation of New Yorkers reflects the psychological anxieties of their time, in their own way. Perhaps the most significant phenomenon is the "bobby-soxer", the 'teen-age girl swooning to night-club crooners. She wears "loafers" (a moccasin-type shoe), short socks, a swing skirt, and a sweater. She attends religiously all theatrical *Premières*, standing on the sidewalk hoping for a glimpse of her idols. When Frank Sinatra moans a song, she goes through a complete ecstatic experience, and her facial expressions are like those on the faces of nuns praying to God; one concludes that psychologically, if not spiritually, their experiences must be similar.

The "bobby-sox" boy wears a bow-tie and a checked coat as he listens avidly to Betty Hutton.

The record shops are a daily buzzing place for these boys and girls, who carve their initials on the walls of the listening-booths, or write with lipstick: "Mary Jane loves Kenneth H.", "Kilroy was here", "I love Frankie Sinatra". Chopin and Tschaikovsky are well-known, but not by their names. A Chopin polonaise becomes a popular song, "Till the End of Time"; the Grieg piano concerto

has words to it: "When your lips meet with mine . . ."; Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto has become: "Full moon and empty arms" . . . Gramophone record sales in the United States have rocketed, and the radio, far from replacing the phonograph, has become an attachment to it.

Less innocent than the "bobby-soxers", and wilfully destructive, are the "autograph hounds", the urchins who professionally collect signatures of movie stars and celebrities to sell them to collectors for prices ranging from ten cents to a dollar. A Frank Sinatra autograph is worth fifty cents, while Cole Porter retails for ten. These children are often vehement and spiteful. They will sometimes hurl insults and abuse at people who are not disposed to sign their books. One star thus had a photograph of herself torn to bits and thrown into her face by an irate "fan". An elderly picture actor, accosted by "autograph hounds", was insulted for his refusal to sign their books. "Oh, to hell with you," shouted the children. "You've got the skids under you anyway, Mr. So-and-so."

These horrible children read the movie magazines avidly, and believe in the publicity rumours as they would in Forestry Department statistics. When they meet the stars in person they are often disappointed. One well-known movie star, making a personal appearance in New York, repeatedly asked the audience to question her. "We in Hollywood so rarely get the chance to meet our public. Ask me anything you want to know." The audience soon tired of the game, began to throw random requests for her to "sing a song" or "do us a little dance". The cinema star had not prepared to do either, and stood impotently while the audience began to stamp and yell: "Well, sing! Well, dance! Well, *do* something!" The management finally brought down the curtain.

IV

To the stranger, the New Yorker's language seems curiously Elizabethan, with its wise-cracks and poetical similes. It is a language that can soon be learnt and which possesses such vitality that foreigners from every country soon become americanized in their mode of speech. New York, with its newspapers printed in thirty-two different languages, has appropriated many foreign words as its own. A posy of flowers is called a "corsage", a buttonhole is "boutenyear",

a mixture of beets, small onions and rissole potatoes is called a "maylonge" of vegetables, and a small cup of black coffee, never in France but always in New York, is a "demmytass". It is a violent language. The English "press", but the New Yorkers "push" a button, and a large amount is a helluvalot. The words "apt" or "likely" are seldom used, and you hear the inevitable, "he is liable to get drunk". "Like" has taken the place of "as if". "He is a lovely man and comes of a lovely family" seems at first strange to English ears, and a great friend is a "good" friend whatever his character. The undertaker is a "mortician", and in the "pantorium" trousers are pressed.

The slang expressions become more elaborate and condensed each year, and certain of them find a permanent home in the language. Others are being gradually dropped or replaced by new phrases. Currently, many irresistible objects "send you" or are "dreamy". Money is "moolah". The young man who says "Let's jump" is inviting the chick to dance; and the chicken replies, "Okay, daddio, knock me out of my everlovin'", which means "Send me out of this world". A word or deed which is final, and brings about a definite reaction, is said to "tear it".

"Shut your mouth" is "drop dead". "Hep-cat", meaning one who is versed in jazz, has become "hipster". The cinema is "pic"; "in there" is "in the groove"; "gone" has replaced "out of this world". Hence, "gone music" is good jazz; "be-hop" is bad jazz. "Goof balls" are capsules of phenobarbitol; "jive" is marihuana, and the marihuana addict is a "tea-smoker". A bum without a place of sleep says, "No pad to be had".

A few more examples should suffice to illustrate the colour and range of American etymological invention. The bathroom is the "john" or the "head". A private detective is a "shamus". To have a great deal of money on one's person is to be "loaded". Instead of whistling after a "sharp chick", men now say, "hubba, hubba". *Double-entendre* is widely understood, and the movies often have scenes of scorching sex dialogue in which the outward meaning is concerned with something quite innocent, such as horse-racing terminology. An American service-man's discharge button is a "gooney bird". To be "clipped for a couple hundred fish" is to lose several hundred dollars in gambling. Often several words are combined in

one. "Au revoir" becomes "seeinya". The taxi-driver goes to "fifthavenya", and advises you in a hurry to "washyerstep" and "taykadeezy", and the newspaper man at the corner of the street inquires, "yessirwaddyuread?"

Of the inventors of language, Messrs. Danton Walker, Walter Winchell, Earl Wilson, Ed Sullivan, and recently Mr. Billy Rose, all of whom have newspaper columns, convey the way Broadway thinks and talks. A new day sees the birth of a new word.

V

The vibrations in the atmosphere jerk and toss the inhabitants of the city like marionettes. In the electrical tornado that engulfs them, the New Yorkers are no more their own masters than are marionettes at the mercy of the strings that motivate their behaviour. One week the New Yorker's fate is to be ecstatically in love, the next to be doomed to despair; another week business soars, then there is an abysmal crash. These violent and unpredictable changes of situation and temperament are apt to make everyone extremely superstitious, hence the enormous number of necromancers in the city, who are often in a position to direct the lives of their clients, among whom are politicians, former war leaders, or Wall Street magnates.

It is seldom that you find repose and solace in the ordinary New York apartment. One of the greatest upheavals that befell the city was when, during a strike, no one could go out to cinema or restaurant, and the radio advised everyone to stay at home by his own hearth. Few New Yorkers utilize their rooms as a home. They are shaved in barbers' shops, they telephone confidentially in public call-boxes, or in intervals at the theatre, they eat in a window, and under the gaze of all and sundry, make love in Central Park. The New Yorker considers he is living in his own person, and wherever that person is, is home. The outside world is his private domain. It is not surprising to see a young man arranging his hair, his hat, tie, and picking his teeth in a mirror under the gaze of the crowd waiting for the elevator, or to find that the visitors to the men's lavatory do not deem it necessary to shut the door of their booth while unself-consciously they sit reading the morning papers.

The New Yorker lives in a bright glare or in impenetrable darkness. Either he lives a secret life, or possesses nothing which cannot be

discovered at first sight. Europeans live in a half-light, with private lives that can be surmised only faintly at first, and into which, in the course of time, one may perhaps be permitted further to enter. In Europe, personal intercourse is full of exciting possibilities. In America, after the first interview, little more is ever forthcoming. In England, when turning on the bath, the water may be cold at first, but, by continuing to turn the tap, the water may become hotter. In America, if the water is not hot at first, it never will become so; generally the hot tap flows hot, and at the same rate.

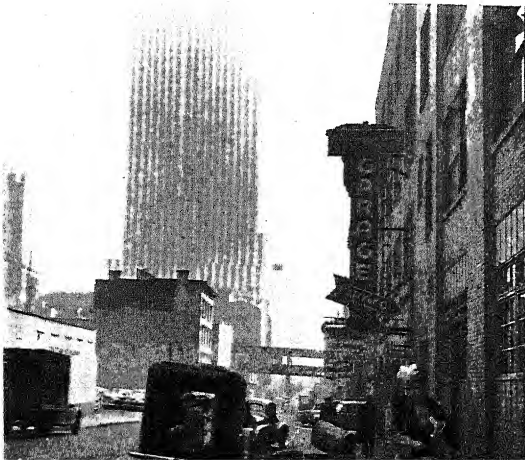
Few New York men over twenty-five are good-looking; often those most charming college boys with poreless complexions, disarming smiles, heavy hands, concave figures and fox-terrier behinds, run to seed at a tragically early age. The rubbery features of these youths do not wear well, and develop often into the foetus face, which, combined with the red complexion, starched collar and deep, rich voice, produce the only too well known type of business man. American voices are widely criticized, but in general the men's voices, if monotonous in intonation, have a musical depth and mobility that make foreigners' voices sound nasal, high-pitched and affected.

The vestiges of his Puritan ancestors are to be found in the American man's self-consciousness at carrying a parcel, and in his respectable armour of well-creased sleeves, star-shining shoes and Derby hat. He has no talent for relaxation; he goes to the country at the week-end for a rest, but he is up early playing golf, back in time for tennis and a swim. Odd moments of his day are taken up by backgammon and bridge, and he never switches off the radio.

The club car on a Pullman train is an institution unknown in Europe. Men sit, spit, smoke, and drink rye and water, telling stories about business or women. The Pullman train with its general car, its club car, its women's and men's compartments and its restaurant car, with a negro attendant, who brushes one's coat at 175th Street, is a cross-section of the institutionalized existence which so many Americans lead.

Most business-men live lives of such concentration that only a fraction of their faculties seem to become developed. During the day, they pursue the dollar with a devoted energy that leaves little time or appetite for leisure in the European sense. Punctuality is



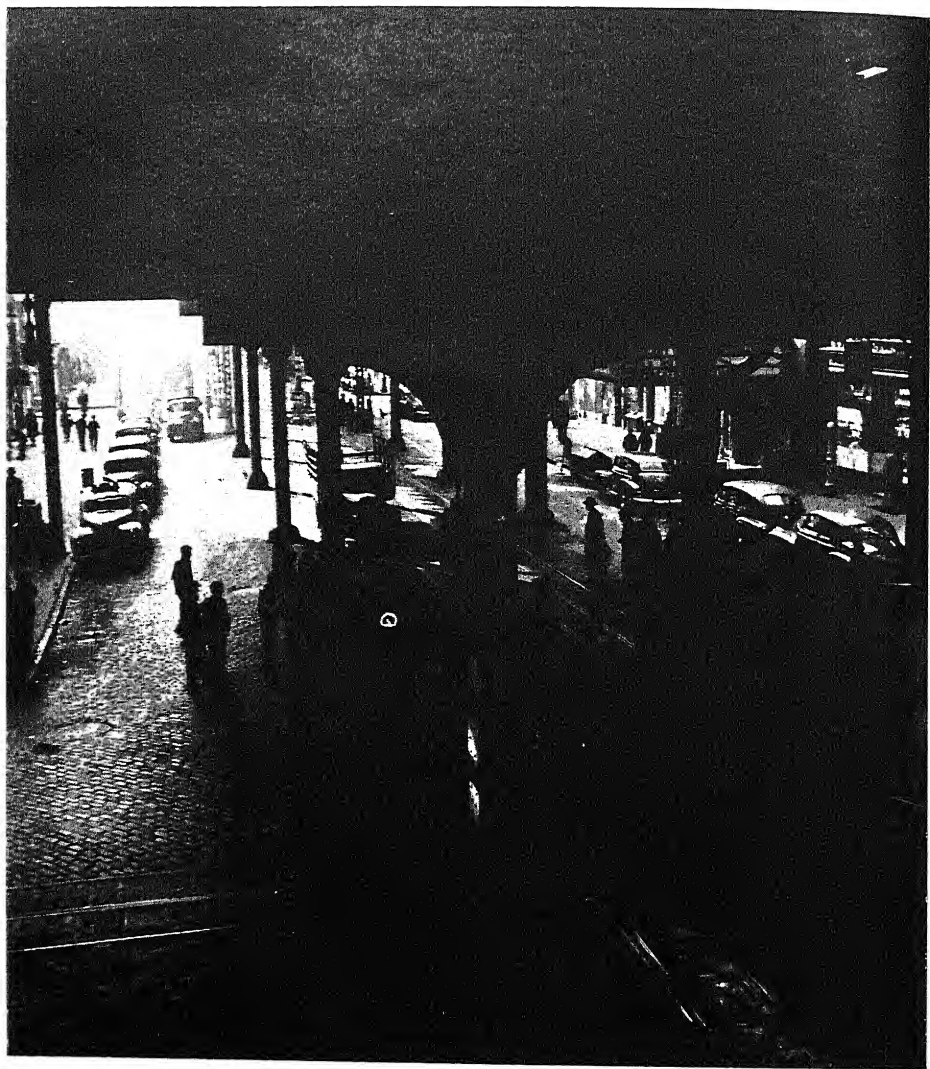


PERSPECTIVES OF



MANHATTAN





ELEVATED RAILWAY, THIRD AVENUE

regarded as indispensable discipline, and in this the "bosses" themselves often set the pace. In many places of business there is actually no valid reason for everyone to arrive sharply at 9 a.m. and leave sharply at 5 p.m. Often the day's work comprises four or five hours' actual task and several hours' loafing. But the American worker is paid for eight hours a day, and whether he works that amount or not, he must be at his place of business for that duration, with his pants warming the seat of his chair.

In the wider, if more flippant, environment in which the New York women display their facility, curiosity, and what they like to be called their intelligence, American business-men are seldom really at their best. The women, glancing lightly and swiftly over myriad subjects, with a smattering of glib sense, are more intellectually developed than their busy husbands, yet they cannot elaborate on a theme, or discuss for any length of time one subject alone. Neither are they usually called upon to do so, for the men, lacking ability to reason and criticize abstractly, are unable to sustain at any length a critical argument involving the use of reason, and break into the conversation.

American business-men are interchangeable parts in a great economic machine, within whose complexities they often lose the sense of value of life. In spite of energy and enthusiasm, they have little professional interest in their work as such, but only in its aspects as a machine that turns out, according to how well it is handled, more or less dollars. Outside their work, in which there is no development of personality, business-men have few hobbies chosen by themselves. The Englishman may garden, the Frenchman discuss the world at a café, but the average New York business-man discusses politics only as it seems to be affecting his personal investment, or whenever election time comes round. He argues vehemently against taxation, beats his tin-drum for *laissez-faire* policies, and is often, though not always, racially prejudiced. He hates to be contradicted on his facts; if his reasoning is questioned he can become extremely petty. His fact-collecting is at best a useless evasion of reality, and, as such, becomes a degenerate habit. It is as superficial as it is necessary for use in a general knowledge game. He takes overdoses of dope in the form of bridge, the cinema, fashionable sports, or looking up some point of information in the encyclopaedia.

The New Yorker's mind is eaten up with the impatience of watching the red light, and the speed mania can be blamed for the lack of a passionate quest for knowledge, of innuendo, of subtlety, or of real romance.

Once, in Hungary, I remember seeing a country wagon, driven by two men and containing a coffin, which was proceeding out of the town towards a remote village. My companion asked if someone was dead at home. The younger man replied: "We have just come into town to do the marketing and we went to see the doctor, and my father-in-law here has been told that he's not got more than six weeks to live. We may not be in again, and to save another journey we're taking the coffin home with us now." This deliberately fatalistic acceptance of the facts of life gives to peasants a personal dignity lost in the hurry of modern existence. The New Yorker's life consists in trying to conceal the facts which lie behind it. It is a typical phenomenon of American life that too many people are busy playing "games of pretence". Just as false accents are cultivated, backgrounds skilfully made more romantic by a glossing over of the real facts, so few people will consider anything which is not cheerful and extraverted. To the more serious side of life, the American's reaction is ostrich-like as he buries his head in the sand of indifference or misunderstanding. In his demonstrations of joy and affection he is like a child.

One cannot but love people who in a spontaneous outburst can convert the serious discipline of the office-room to the gaiety of the schoolroom and, for the sheer joy of it, throw out of the window all the paper they can lay hands on. Even the telephone book, the stenographers' bible, is sacrificed, and those sacred sheets of memo pads, notepaper, bills, envelopes and letters swing their zigzag path down to the caverns below. The effect is as if a flock of birds were released from every window, as if a bridal couple were showered with confetti. One of the regulations, necessary in a city of skyscrapers, is that nothing may be thrown from the windows; yet, on festive occasions, rules are made to be broken, and tons of paper were thrown from the windows at the end of World War II.

VI

Although in 1844 "Bishop Benjamin T. Onderdonk was tried by a court of bishops for immorality and impurity, for being caught

petting in a buggy", to-day, among the younger men and girls, light flirtation, as it is known, is extremely frequent. It is superficial and begins young; so that American girls have a worldly wisdom often surprising to Europeans, and are not easily carried away by flattery or by the love affairs into which they may enter.

American debutantes understand, and take for granted, the fact that most men are "wolves". The men seem to be proud of their reputation for promiscuity, and the "sowing of wild oats" in America is not a phase of youth, but a perpetual masculine behaviour. As intrinsic a part of the evening's entertainment, as the gardenias, theatre and night-club, is the pantomime in the cab and on the doorstep. To take a girl home in a taxi without kissing her may even be considered an insult on the part of the "escort". Even if she may not desire it, for the girl to accept an invitation to dine and go on



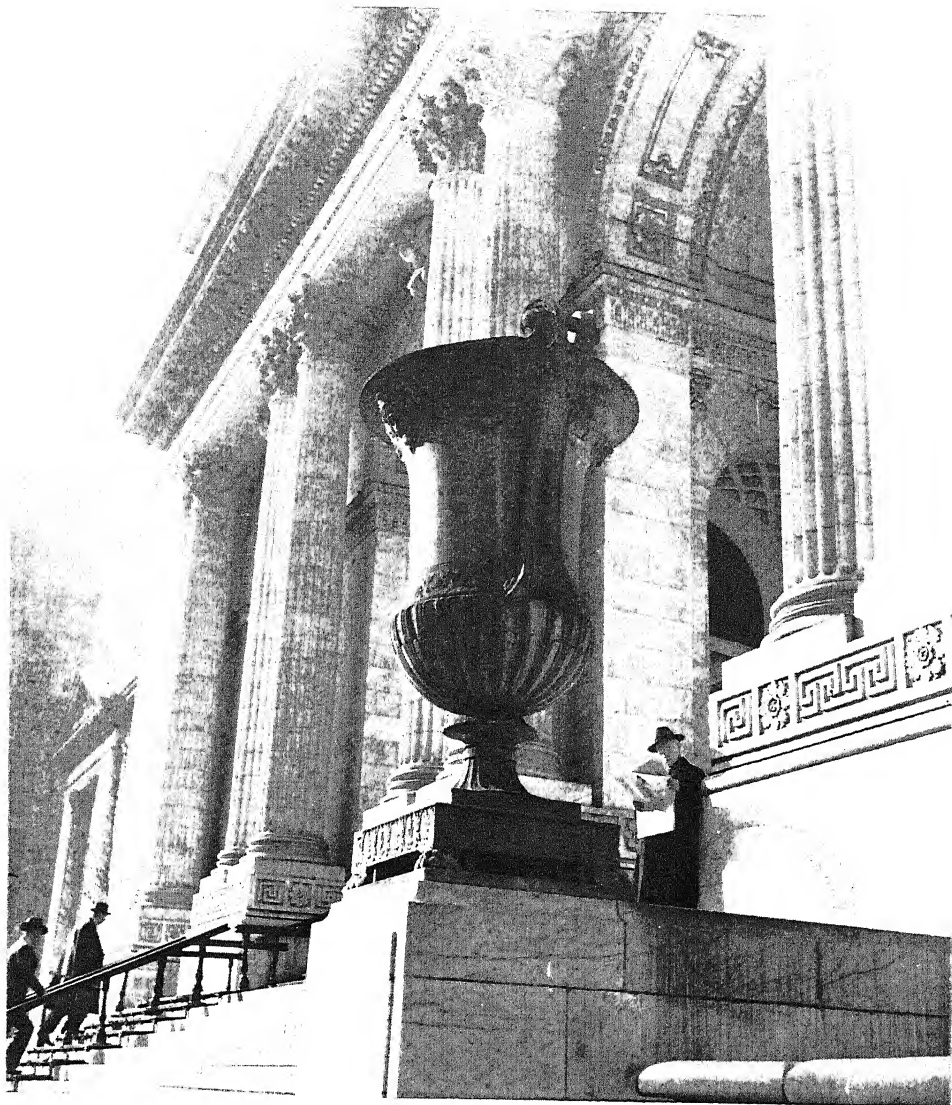
out afterwards with a man usually means that she will tolerate the making of "passes" on the way home. Ultimately, it is often true that American men have little respect for their women with regard to the more subtle beauties of mind and spirit: women are regarded often for their physical charms alone, and the men tend to place them in the categories of "objects" rather than persons, preferring to get life's less fleshy values out of their friendships with other men. Yet, at the same time, America is a strongly matriarchal society, and it is the women who dominate the home with possessive vigour. American men are most deeply attached to their mothers, and perhaps it is this "mass Oedipus Complex" which gives rise to the ambivalence of feeling towards women. Yet it is true that the "wolves", when they find the right girl, will transfer all their

latent ideals on to her, and make her the protector of the faith.

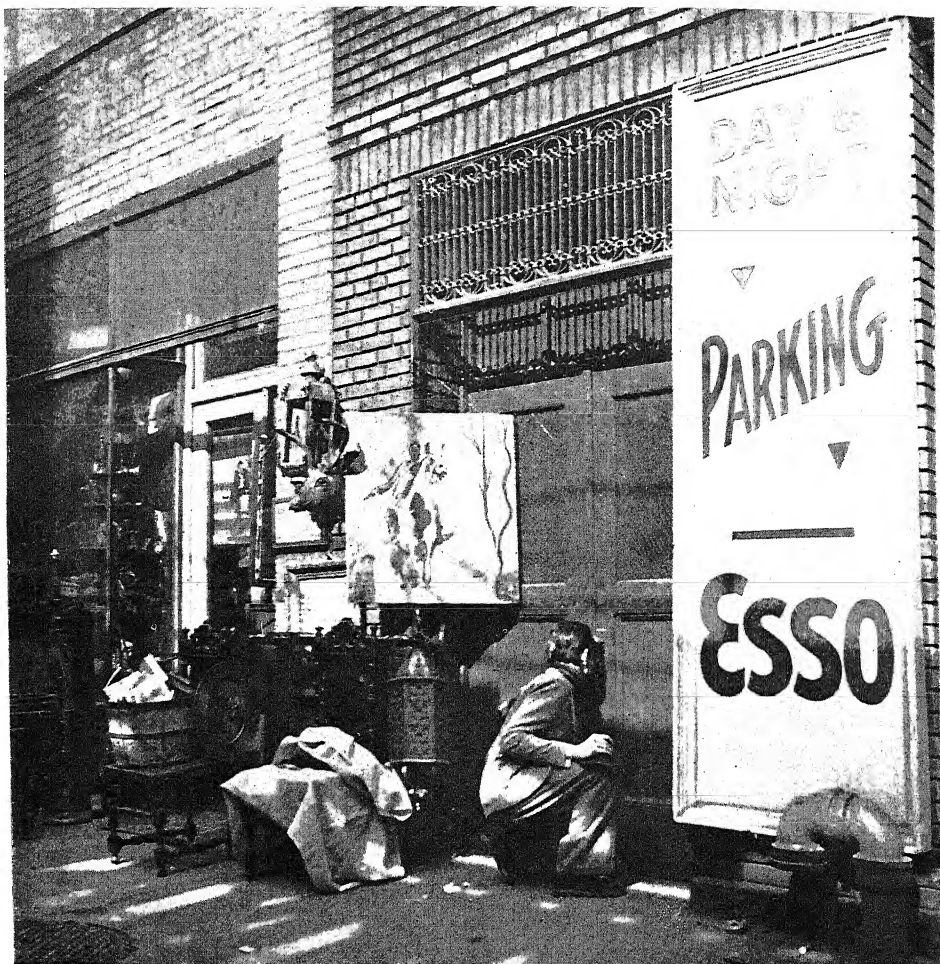
Again, the speed mania is responsible for dispensing with the usual formalities of courtship, and produces an enormous number of hasty marriages. During the war, the pace doubled and trebled, and many couples were married on an acquaintanceship of a few hours; this accounts for the post-war rise in marital troubles and divorces. At a cocktail party, a girl and boy, introduced to one another, seemed not particularly interested in each other, yet left the party together, drove into the country and were married on the basis of a few minutes' acquaintance. The secretary of the head of a large corporation in New York announced one night that she must leave, as the previous night she had become married to a boy she had met at a party an hour or two before.

That the number of divorces is higher in America than in Europe does not mean that the standard of morals is lower. In the old world, it is still a point of honour to *keep up one's position*, and love affairs must adapt themselves to that. Here, a change of heart almost necessarily brings about a change of circumstances.

In the Times Square district, around the dance-halls, one finds young women of easy virtue, but often they are out for pleasure rather than money and there are few tarts in the fashionable quarters of the city. During the war, there were a great many "victory girls", adolescents of fifteen or sixteen, who roamed the streets, picking up American servicemen, "doing their bit for their country", and thus creating a serious moral problem. In the fashionable quarters the system is different. The men pay highly for their "women", who are often stunningly dressed as they enter a night-club on the arm of their benefactor. There was a time when the prostitutes did not accost, and the initiative was more with the men; but a species of female "wolf" is springing up, and now they meet the men more than half-way. In New York it seems that the men outnumber the women; and you will not find anything comparable to certain quarters of Paris, where the prostitutes roam the streets accosting every man they meet. In Times Square at night most of the women have already made a conquest. Only here and there an older woman offers a "quickie" in hall-ways for a "quarter a throw".



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JUNK PLOT

As dead men in a cemetery are hidden by catafalques of wreaths and flowers, both real and artificial, so this rather deadening effect of modern life on human nature is concealed in New York by the manners of society, which are more exaggerated, if less effective, than those of Europe. In the drawing-room, men will rise too often when women come and go. The general rules of behaviour are rigidly adhered to, and Mrs. Post's book on etiquette is as strictly interpreted in Gotham as the Koran in Mecca. Every morning a newspaper carries an illustrated feature called "The Correct Thing", and many books will teach you from which side to approach your chair at the dinner table; while the courses given at the many charm schools show that this quality is largely a question of manners. During the war there were some changes—formal dress was given up at theatre and opera—but etiquette is still maintained, and the recent opening of the Metropolitan Opera found the crowds once more headed back to pre-war splendour.

When eating at table it is considered impolite, after the food is cut up, to use the knife. Contrary to many Europeans, Americans always eat with the fork in the right hand, switching the knife and fork after they have cut their food. A napkin is served with the cocktail and canapés, toothpicks are used while hidden behind a curved palm, yet Henry the Eighth's robust habit of eating chicken legs and cutlet bones in the fingers is still seen in the most genteel New York households.

The general attitude is one of *Bonhomie* and good fellowship. In American justice the suspect is considered guilty until he is proved innocent, but in society the opposite applies, and the New Yorker's national expectation of good intentions is only damped when manners are so bad that to disregard them is an impossibility. A foreigner, not realizing this, may often take offence where none was meant, for it is sometimes difficult to know when the "kidding" is "on the level". It is significant that, instead of saying, "Give my best regards—Give my kind wishes", in New York they say, "Give her all sorts of messages", which to the foreigner has an ambiguous tone. Introductions are broadcast in a breezy plethora. In Europe, if a third party comes up to talk it is not necessary to introduce your friend

to the new arrival, making it obligatory for your friend to bow to this third party on future occasions. Not so in New York, where, if the introduction is only muttered, the third party will challenge with, "I did not quite catch the name. How do you spell it?" But as the average American is highly trained in paying attention to detail, introductions will generally be efficiently performed. Names are correctly pronounced and correctly repeated. Two women acquaintances meet formally at a dinner party after an interval of some years. The one extending her arm inquires punctiliously, "Still the same name?"

In the streets alongside Fifth Avenue, from the thirtieth street to the ninetieth, one is struck by the luxurious neatness of the women. The fashions are typically American, even if inspired by Paris. For *Life's* Beauty Contest in 1901, Charles Dana Gibson drew twenty beauties, as indistinguishable to our eyes to-day as a litter of the best spaniels, and they were no more typically American than the English Gibson Girls. But the New York ladies of to-day could never be mistaken for any other nationality, as they totter along, with pallid, kid-glove skin, large mouths, flamboyantly enlarged with lipstick, hard bright eyelets, well-constructed jaws, high cheekbones and flowing manes of hair. Their features are well defined, if not of the classical order. The nose will have a sinus bump on the ridge. They wear the uniform of neat skin-tight black jacket, fresh little cutlet frills at collar and cuffs, a row of pearls, loosely hanging mink coat, excessively well-cut new shoes and Buster Brown hat, perched straight on top of the head.

Their slim elegance is a natural product of the continent. Thoroughbred horses, when brought to America, develop such slim attenuated legs that the breed has continuously to be renewed with stallions brought from Europe. Can it be that the rock of Manhattan, this very ground itself, is responsible for the legs, arms and hands of such grace, wrists and ankles that are so fine? With their long, square-ended fingers (each joint marking a separate compartment of usefulness), their bloodless hands, blue-veined, of a veal-steak whiteness, and their long shaft-like legs, hitched to a high waistline, stenographers, shop assistants, millionaires' wives and Follies' girls alike give the impression of aristocracy and fine breeding.

Among most peoples middle age is quickly betrayed by hands and

wrists, which develop an appearance of weakness and uselessness, and so demand a generous covering of cuff. But the hands of the middle-aged New York woman require nothing of the sort. However much in other respects her contours may be growing flabby, the hands remain firm and expressive.

Madison Avenue boasts the well-to-do business women, or the debutantes out shopping and lunching; 42nd Street is crowded with the office-workers, stenographers, file girls, who, working for twenty-five dollars a week (the New York white-collar worker is one of the lowest paid workers in the United States), dress simply but with taste, and often make their own dresses from patterns. Their physical beauty will stand comparison with the Madison Avenue *clientèle*.

Beauty is common, and, therefore, many women cultivate brains as well; but they all do it in the same way.

To the Englishman, at first sight, the New York ladies appear hard and awe-inspiring; but he will realize when the next boat comes in that the English beauty does not transplant well, and looks strangely dowdy, and her figure clumsily constructed, in such surroundings. The English rose, her erstwhile pink cheeks now roughened with broken blood-vessels, seeking shade beneath a brim, suddenly loses her literary quality and old-world charm.

American women accept the current fashion in voices as readily as the latest clothes. A few years ago it seemed that it was fashionable to be hoarse and raucous. The "Hawiiaghyurrs" were thrown deafeningly around the restaurants and dance floors. Then the sophisticated debutantes, those strange glamour girls whose aim was to look like torch singers, spoke in breathless, powdered voices—tubercular invalids succumbing after their last cigarette. To-day, the affectation is to be natural: not to be natural, but to *affect* being natural; the difference is more than subtle.

There is even a standardized laugh, made by screwing up the nose and lowering the corners of the mouth. Two women, having lunched together, do not waste any airs and graces on one another. They smoke steadily over their carrot *purée* as grimly as two business-men in a club: they practise untiringly the technique of entertaining. "Have I told you this story before?" one will ask as her listener's eyes wander. "You're sure? Because I know lots of others."

VIII

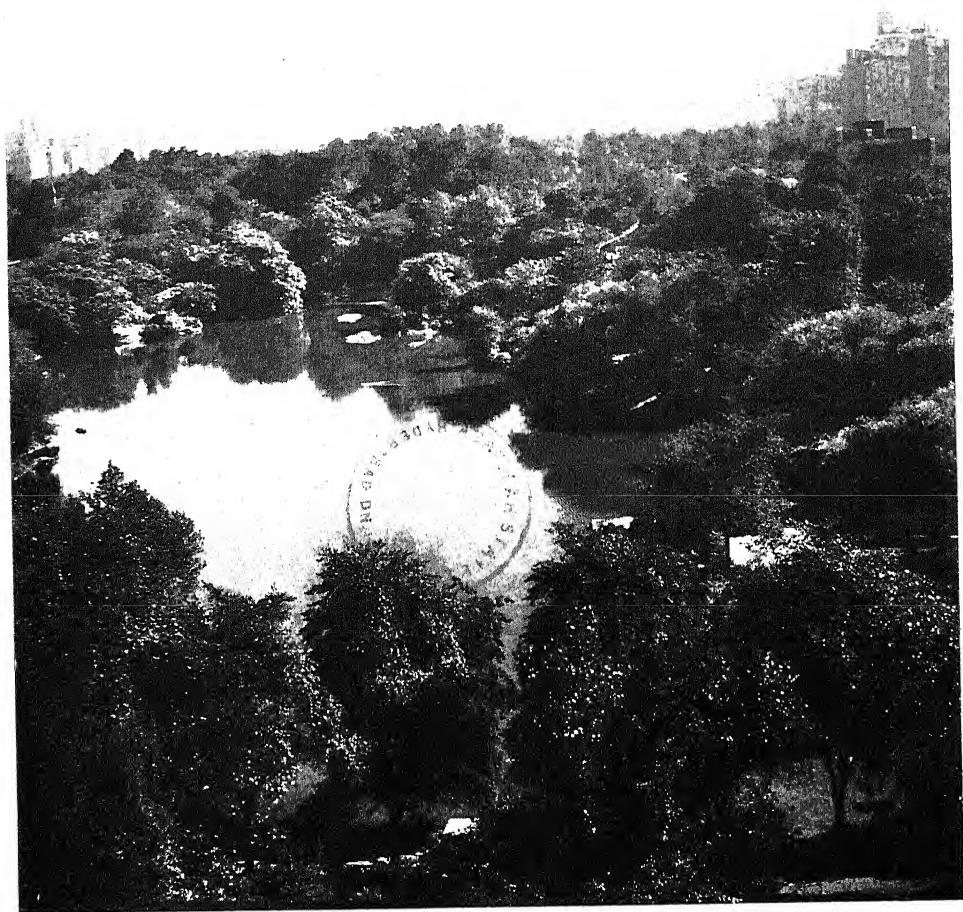
How sudden are the changes of temperature in winter! One may go confidently to the theatre without an overcoat to find arctic conditions prevailing by the end of the last act. In an hour, the snow can fall so heavily and freeze so quickly that parked cars become embedded igloos by the sidewalk. The Removal Squads roar out into desperate action, knowing how much harder will be their task as the freezing hours continue to pass. When the ice becomes steel and pickaxes are of no avail, only a rise of temperature can make the roads safe for the traveller.

A typical day gives the effect of pristine clarity. The sky is sunny and piercing blue. The wind blows in unexpected gusts. At each corner is the scimitar of draught. At 20th Street a woman in a racoon coat and white tennis shoes is waiting for something, and, as if for her especial delight, as reward for her patience, a long strip of cellophane ribbon, escaped maybe from a factory window, is flashing in tortured swirls before her. In the gusty breeze, it forms arabesques in true baroque manner. In the sunlight it flashes like a knife, like a swordfish. Incongruous in the setting of hard poverty and utilitarian emptiness, against the relentless brick walls, the torn posters, the overflowing refuse cans and spattered pavements, this quicksilver phenomenon is as beautiful as lightning, with as little affinity to this world.

In the high wind, shirts, pyjamas, underclothes, sheets and other ghostly manifestations of pink, mauve and white flutter on the lines, garlanded from window to fire-escape. Each day the washing takes on a varying personality. To-day the gusts make the empty clothes dance gaily, and there are many of them. Another day they are sparse in number, and they hang, elongated and forlorn, flapping dolefully.

New York dirt is gritty and less clinging than the greasy grime of London. The atmosphere looks so clean that it is only when you leave open your windows, and the sill becomes black with dirt, or, when you walk down the street and are likely to be interrupted by a large lump of grit in your eye, that you discover that the city is probably dirtier than any other.

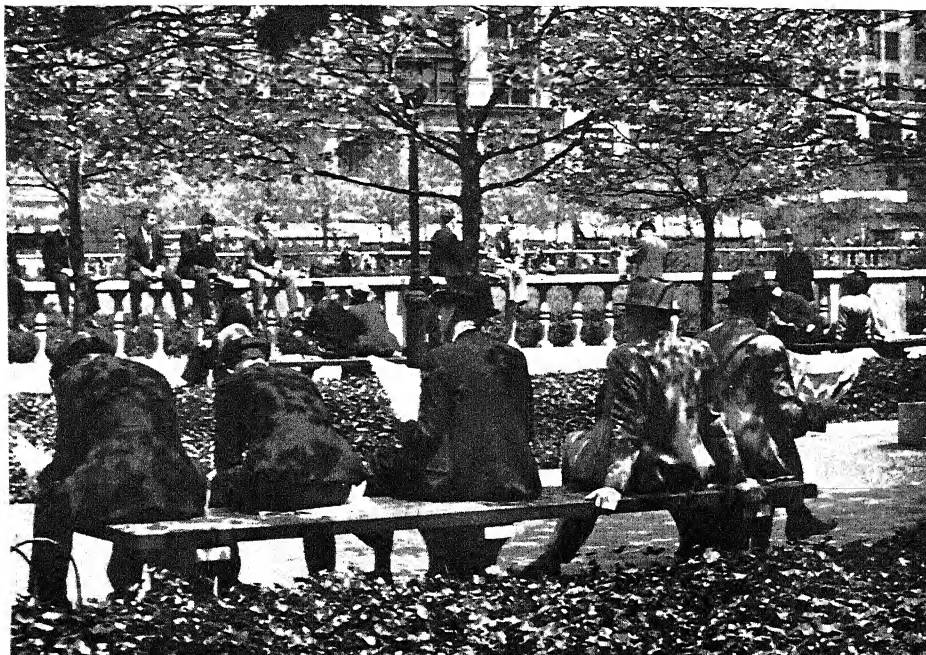
Pet dogs wear coats, chauffeurs fur coats, the policemen's ears are



CENTRAL PARK

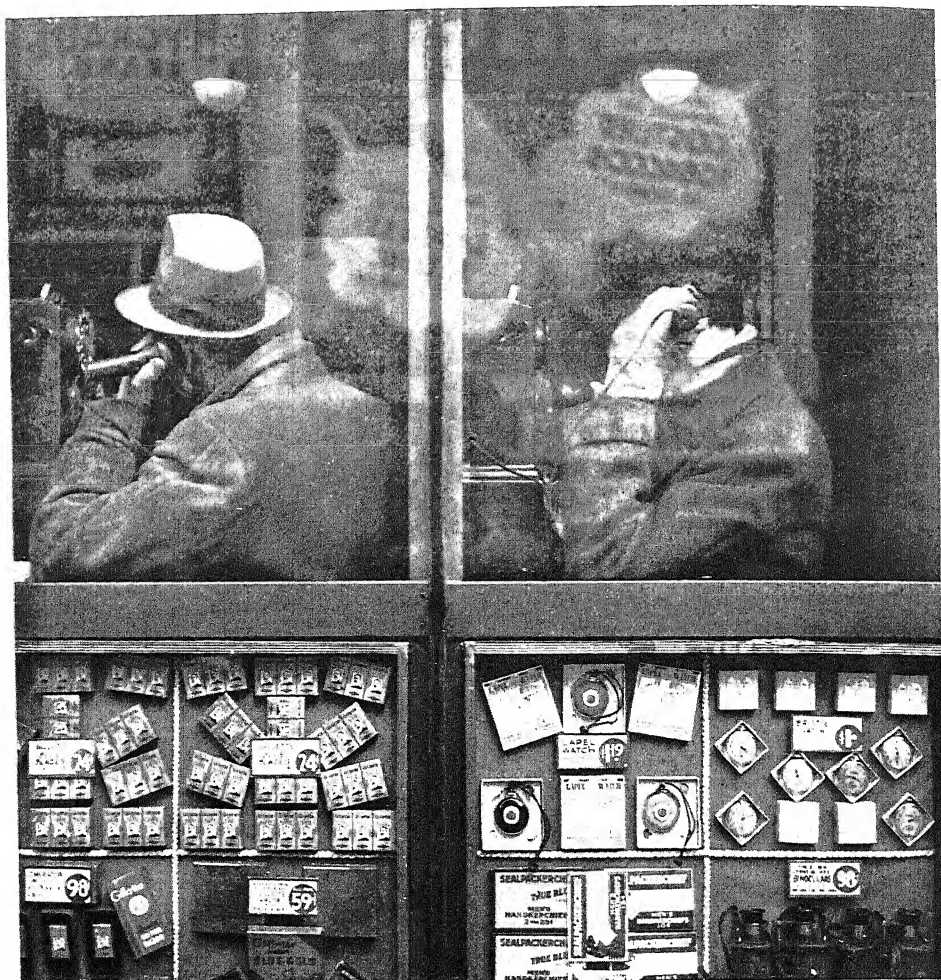


BROADWAY PATTERN





EATING ON BROADWAY



DRUG STORE SERVICE

covered, but one turn of the swing door and all is changed. No further energy need be expended upon keeping warm; the steam heat, which obliges one to wear tropical clothes indoors all the year round, suddenly dries the skin. The inside of the nose feels crusted, so that one longs to pick it. The heart throbs and bangs as if for release.



New York in winter is at its gayest and most glittering. There are many visitors, and the season is full of emphasis on social activity; the theatre session comprises twenty or thirty comedies, dramas and musicals; the cycles of opera begin in November; concerts and recitals are given at Carnegie Hall. It is a season of parties, of débuts and disasters, of new faces, new names, and of new successes weaving their way into the gaudy kaleidoscope of New York life.

Although New York has more windows than any other city in the world, it has no window life. In Italy, Portugal and Spain a large part of the day is spent leaning on the window-sill. A ball in a London square used to bring the neighbouring footmen, housemaids

and passers-by to see the dancing figures pass lighted windows. Tweenies in curl papers gazed dreamily down into lamplit squares before going to bed. Yet here, in New York, never a face is to be seen at the numberless windows. Only when one passes them in an elevated train do these illuminated frames show any life at all: a family in shirt-sleeves eats its evening meal in full view of the plumbing fixtures; a couple dances half-heartedly to an unheard radio; a man, like a wax figure, studies an unseen mirror as he shaves his latherless face with an electric razor.

To assure himself that New York is beautiful, the pedestrian must crane his neck in crowded streets, and perhaps doubt still remains. From the highest windows, New York can be seen at her most magical when, as James Pope-Hennessy has said, the lighted skyscrapers at night are like sticks of Elizabethan jewellery.

But New Yorkers can find little time to gaze from windows. Perhaps it is only on Sundays that they watch the pale yellow sky, the sunset of rose and opal, the sunrise of apple-green, and the pigeons. A distant flock of black, brown and white specks vanishes completely each time it wheels back and forth over the same three blocks of skyscrapers. Soaring, dipping and weaving in unison, the pigeons repeat, continuously, their conjurer's trick of disappearance and reappearance, until their leader drops to rest on a rooftop, where an Italian boy comes to feed them.

Instead of raising vegetables on the garden roof, business and pleasure are combined by selling squabs and keeping pets. On the roofs in cages, locked up at night, the pigeons are let out at intervals during the day for exercise. The Italian boy knows his pigeons by name and recognizes them individually even in flight. Sometimes he takes them to Brooklyn, whence they will fly straight home. The life of a pigeon owner is an exciting one, for piracy adds to the difficulty of keeping the flocks intact. Sometimes a straying bird flies away, near to a roof where a rival collection lives. With a long pole to which a white flag is attached, the rival owner waves to attract the pigeon, or sometimes he will send out his own flock to surround the vagrant, which, should it be lured into the enemy's camp, must submit forthwith to having its wings clipped.

It is curious that, in the most modern of cities, the most ancient form of messenger service should still be employed. The United

States Army sometimes uses pigeons for messenger service in the Manhattan area.

IX

Though New York is perhaps its real self in winter, he who visits it at this season only knows one aspect of the character of the people. An integral part of life in winter is the bustle, restlessness, anxious pace and striving for efficiency. All this changes in the torpid heat of summer. People walk more slowly, talk more quietly, idle away an afternoon. Everyone relaxes, and the dollar is hunted with less zest. It is difficult to believe that the grassless tracks of Central Park, so bleak and sand-coloured, could now become so green. Central Park is unrecognizable with its idylls of people in swings, in rustic arbours, children feeding the ducks and lovers lying under the blossoming trees. Flowers live their short lives in gallant profusion. Roofs become penthouse gardens, locales of Health Centre exercises, and neighbours in shorts do desultory jerks on the parapet. Hotel roof-gardens, which are not out of doors, are artificially decorated to seem so. Every piece of unused property becomes a tennis court, and people ride in the subway with golf clubs to Van Cortland Park.

Indoors, the thick carpets are rolled away to reveal cool, shining floors, and chintz covers replace the pretentious effects of false Louis Quinze. Even the palatial hotels assume a cottagy aspect, the managers resemble the chorus of a musical comedy in their white flannels, and the clientele become a people with only the intent to keep cool. The offices of many businesses give their employees a respite, and on the hottest days work is suspended in early afternoon. But unlike those who live in the expensive hotels, the working men and women return to small foetid apartments, impossible of ventilation, where the temperature is that of a slow oven. In the tropic heat, New York becomes a hell for the poor, as well as intolerable for the more fortunate who, because of business, have not been able to get away to Long Island or Connecticut. Business-men wear holiday clothes, removing their coats. Workmen sleep on their backs, in the sun, on the roofs. Journalists fry their mythical eggs on the pavement. Sweat pours from the forehead, neck, waist, temples and arms, as in a steam-room; several times a day the shirt must be changed. The rich sleep in air-conditioned rooms; but for the poor,

there is no alleviation from the baking streets at night; sleep is impossible, and they toss and turn all night long. Children lie naked in the streets, waiting for the water trucks to come past and spray them. Somebody will turn on a fire hydrant, and the children will have an extra bathe, until the policeman on the beat comes along. People go to the cinema, not so much to see Danny Kaye, as to feel the violent chill of the air-conditioned movie-houses. Another cold bath is drawn; even the ice-cream no longer tastes cool.

With daylight saving, daylight dining begins. In Lewisohn Stadium, thousands of workers gather in the evenings to witness ballet, concert artists or symphony orchestra. The audience looks up angrily when an aeroplane motor temporarily drowns out Violetta's big first act aria.

All who can, drive out, or take subway, bus, train and ferry-boat, as early in the day as possible, to bathe and lie in the sun. On the road leading to Jones Beach the cars are jammed in a small jerking progress. The girls from the five-and-ten-cent store, and the elevator men call back and forth good-naturedly while waiting in the traffic blocks, eating "hot-dogs" and drinking soft drinks from the wayside stands. Amateur fishermen go out in small boats deep-sea fishing, or stand at the end of breakwalls, throwing out their lines and listening to the melancholy clanging of the buoy-bell. From the big liners you see small craft studded solid with picnickers and their fishing lines. On to mile-long beaches the sea tosses beer bottles and orange peel; and on Sundays thousands of hikers climb along the Palisades. Excursion boats of lovers go up the river to Bear Mountain to the camps provided by the city, with dancing on board ship to tinkling music.

Every Saturday and Sunday a million people go to bathe at Coney Island, reached by subway in half an hour. They stay until the electric bulbs silhouette the minarets, domes and turrets, illumine the skeletons of roller-coasters and the magnificent pleasure-palace of George C. Tilyou (the Barnum of Coney Island), which with its many columns and electrical splendour, resembles something from the Pan-American exposition of 1900. The passengers on the Cyclone rend the air with their concerted screams, so many muezzins calling the *azan*. Centrifugal force spins pink sugar cotton on to a stick, and in sheer abandon strangers take bites from the "cotton candy"



BOWERY DESIGN



"the graceful and artificial token of a social system"



of others. The side-shows advertise mermaids, elephant-boys and dancing girls. Barkers talk themselves hoarse. This pleasure park, so frankly commercial and ugly in its myriad aspects, is for some a high romanticism for our age, where the adults, with eyes shining like children, are ecstatically happy as they wander along eating ripe yellow corn-on-the-cob, and contemplate a ride on the "Bobsled". The lights blaze on, and Coney Island, in the darkness of the western world's night, keeps alive the spirit of Hans Christian Andersen, adding to it that American vulgarity which at its worst is awful, and at its best possesses a shocking beauty. It is the core of the American spirit, that two-headed disk which, with thaumatropic abandon, blends ugliness and magic to create a whole new genre, defying criticism and inviting wonder.

IV

MECHANICS OF EVERYDAY

I

OF Manhattan's two main railroad stations, Grand Central, with its famous oyster bar, is more famous than Pennsylvania Station, though the latter has a greater daily passage of travellers. Pennsylvania Station is said to have been inspired by the ruins of the baths of Caracalla in Rome, and its massive columns spread over a whole block. Grand Central Station was designed by Whitney Warren, and is a marble cathedral turned into a museum without exhibits. The main concourse is two hundred and seventy-five feet long and one hundred and twenty feet wide. Immense double windows let the sunlight through in great shafts. There are forty-two express train tracks on the upper level, departing from the heart of the city by tunnel to Albany, Buffalo and points west and north to Boston. The lower level has twenty-five local tracks for commuters to Westchester and Connecticut. There are restaurants and shops on the lower levels, and for people who have missed their trains or arrived too early for them, there is a newsreel theatre.

II

Since the war brought an influx of population which has remained after the hostilities, every hotel in New York has been overcrowded, and it is impossible to rent a small apartment at a reasonable figure. New York has over three hundred and twenty thousand rooms for rental each night.

The Hotel Plaza, situated at the south-east corner of Central Park, maintains its standard of luxury. Although its plumbing and some of its furniture have been modernized since it was built in 1907, its marbles and elaborate entrances still preserve, like a flask of ancient perfume, the elegance and leisure of another age. The Plaza has gone beyond mere success, and mellowed into a real New York tradition. A number of its original employees are still performing duty, and many of its wealthy tenants bear the surnames of those

who, a generation ago, sat and conversed in the ornate lobby. The horse-drawn victorias outside have waited for occupants since the hotel opened.

Nearly two thousand keys are made yearly to replace losses and cover duplicate needs. Many of the suites and apartments rent as high as ten and twenty thousand dollars a year. About half of the hotel's clients are permanent guests, a number of whom have elderly dogs which the bell-boys take strolling in Central Park. The management has always been discreet in its redecorating, and the re-furnishing is done in such a manner that the discriminating patrons tacitly approve. I myself have decorated a suite with various pieces which I found about the hotel, and the total effect is not untypical of old Plaza magnificence. The Plaza maintains some one thousand three hundred and fifty employees to serve the needs of its guests in its one thousand and fifty-six rooms, in which daily three thousand meals are consumed and the laundry turnover amounts to more than one thousand three hundred pieces of linen.

Of the other fashionable hotels, the Waldorf-Astoria is the largest and perhaps the most impersonal in the world: twenty-seven thousand tons of steel were used in its construction. Throughout the year its lobby is filled with men puffing fat cigars and telephoning, sending radiograms or buying anything from jewellery to cruise tickets; and during Convention Week do not be surprised to come across, at the top of the stairs, in the centre of an admiring crowd, glistening in its coat of maroon paint, the latest super-streamlined automobile.

The St. Regis has pretty French rooms, with tall patisseries ceilings, and the Ambassador, after its dazzling youth, has settled down to a quiet and elegant middle age. The Savoy Plaza gives an effect of ostentatious speed. So many friends have arrived with their families at the small and comparatively inexpensive Gladstone, that the atmosphere is more like that of a house-party.

The Astor Hotel is more like a terminal than a place in which to sleep. The Algonquin is old-fashioned, with good food, and is frequented by actors and journalists. The effect of the Murray Hill Hotel (soon to be torn down to make way for modernism) is completely Edwardian—goldfish have swum in their dark pool for fifty years and the Nottingham lace curtains hang lifelessly at the windows. The Brevoort and the Lafayette, characterized by their superb

cooking and lack of decoration, are old-fashioned and far from the heart of the city. New York hotels are so accommodating that the frightened spinster can go to the Martha Washington, that gloomy subject for ribald jokes, without fear of meeting a man in the hall. The Mills Hotels, little better than "flop-houses", rent rooms for a dollar to the "clean man".

A manager of one of the great hotels confessed that he was appalled by the sadness of the lives of those living in the honeycombs between the walls of his hotel. "If you open one of these doors," he said, "you will see jealousies, rowings, drunkenness and loneliness." There are the people who try to vacate their rooms without paying their bills, leaving their luggage behind—one trunk contained the hotel cat; those who arrive on stretchers in order to fulfil their lifelong desire to die in comparative luxury. In one room, an unhappily drunken trio, wife, husband and lover, are trying to thrash out their marital difficulties. Suddenly the wife screams: she can stand this no longer: she rushes from the room, leaving her husband and her lover together, makes a dart for the elevator, which just happens to be passing her floor: the attendant is slow in closing the gilt doors and the desperate woman leaps through them. She is too late to catch the lift, but falls in a drunken stupor amongst the black oily cables on the roof of the cage, to lie, undetected, going up and down, up and down, past the numerous floors of the hotel, all through the night. Meanwhile the lover is searching the city for her; the husband is bewildered when next morning a lobby attendant appears at the door and says, "We have found the corpse." The wife, covered with black grease, is brought in and laid upon the bed on which she slowly recovers from nothing worse than bruises and a hangover.

The manager is called. There is trouble on the 27th floor. A woman is in a terrible mess. She stands screaming. What has happened is this: she has spent the day in preparation for the evening. She has had a face-do, her hair dyed and set, her finger- and toe-nails enamelled, the whiskers zipped off her legs. At eight o'clock she is ready dressed in her new evening gown with the low *décolletage*. She waits in vain. At eight-thirty she has telephoned to a restaurant to inquire if her beau happens to be waiting for her, to be informed by the *maître d'hôtel* that he is there but dining with her rival. In

highest anguish she decides she will order from the room service her solitary dinner of carrots. The waiter brings the carrot dish. The woman shouts, "Take it away! *That* is not how I like my carrots. Bring me proper creamed *purée* of carrots!" Half an hour later the waiter returns with another carrot dish. "Take it away!" the woman yells again. "That is not the way to send up carrot *purée*." A third time the waiter brings in a dish of carrots, and a third time the woman yells at the waiter, who, by now, has had enough. Aiming at the white satin *décolletage*, he throws the scalding dish. By the time the manager appears, the waiter has already left, doubtless to receive another job at a nearby hotel. The manager is unable to placate the woman by suggesting that the hotel will be only too pleased to pay for a doctor to attend her scalded *décolletage* and to provide a replica of her new white satin gown.

Another hotel manager told me, though what powers of persuasion he used he did not disclose, that once he had to try to persuade a woman perched on the window ledge, thirty floors above the street, not to commit suicide. After six hours of concentrated effort he was successful, and the woman crawled back to comparative safety.

III

Most New York buses are operated by a single man, who combines the functions of driver and conductor. Above his head is a notice: "Please do not address the Operator while the Car is in Motion." No wonder; for not only must he drive through a fast-moving mass of traffic, but, simultaneously, he must open and shut the doors with foot-levers and give passengers their change. The passenger drops a nickel through a small hole from which by a complicated course it proceeds through a glass box and lies there for all to see. Now the operator opens a trap-door which tosses the coin into an elaborate testing-machine. When it has successfully passed this ordeal, the driver-conductor decides to release it from the bottom of the coin-collecting device, to be placed in the change-maker attached conveniently at hand. Out of this he can subsequently select any change he requires by pressing a releasing lever under the tube holding the proper coin, there being several tubes for various coin denominations. This lengthy process continues while the bus is in motion, although it stops every hundred yards down the avenue.

Many of the New York taxis are falling apart. They are getting so old that they are catching up with London's jerky boxes of cracked mackintosh-leather that smell of old stables. Owned by various companies or independent drivers, New York taxicabs are painted brightly to offset their battered interiors: yellow, red, yellow-red, yellow-green and orange. Many of them are fitted with sightseeing roofs of glass, which seem unnecessary since they are seldom cleaned, and are so opaque that any view of the sky would require extra-retineal vision. They also possess radios which do not work (the knobs are broken off), gaping holes which presumably once held pull-out cigarette trays and heaters. Though often unrecognizable, and sometimes hung upside down, a framed photograph of the driver accompanies his registration card. Every nationality is represented by the most outlandish names. Jesus Romero, driver 151914; or Mihran Shishmanian, Isador Schlamowitz, Michael Tuohy, Pietro di Lucia. All of them are good drivers, but their personalities vary: one driver is rude; another, if encouraged, tells dirty jokes; another boasts his relationship with a well-known family in London; many of them have a racket of telling stories to get sympathy tips. One driver will turn in his seat and tell you: "My last fare was sort of a nut. She tells me to drive very slow and carefully, 'cause she says she has just taken a laxative, then she says she thinks we had better stop altogether and she takes a powder and leaves me waiting. So I'm thinking this is kind of a gyp, 'cause the meter is ticking up so high, but the little lady reappears all right and pays me off at a dollar twenty, thanking me very much." Another driver jerks his thumb back: "See that guy? I drink up his port—imported most of it. Sure I got a bottle on ice right now. He's got some of that tawny stuff, but I prefer the Californian. Sure, that's right, I guess it cools better."

American taxi-drivers know comparatively few addresses. In London, a driver must go to the School of Knowledge and the Scotland Yard School for drivers. A certain geographical bump is obligatory, thus it is possible to say "St. Stephen's, Walbrook" or "the Trocadero". American drivers, without such obligatory schooling, are strangely ignorant of the city in which they work, and it is necessary to give the exact location of the Cort Theatre or the Lenox Hill Hospital.

The rate is twenty cents for the first quarter of a mile, and five cents for each subsequent quarter of a mile, which works out at something over two cents per block. Perhaps it is the greater distances that make this means of transport seem more expensive than any other in the world.

IV

The entertainment value of shopping in New York is the best in the world. The big department stores are full of surprises and new inventions. The *souks* of India and Morocco are no more fascinating than the stalls at Macy's, where copies of expensive foreign items can often be obtained for a pittance. It is the place for people with Cartier tastes and *Trois Quartiers* means. Cocteau talks of the inspired rubbish in the drug-stores. Books and medicines are cheaper there than at the chemist's or the library. Hammacher Schlemmer produces a fantastic variety of household inventions: a Rotissant, electrically operated, which automatically cooks, bastes and turns a fowl; the newest in glass Drip-Drip coffee-makers; a food mixer which electrically mixes everything from cake batter to mashed potatoes; and an alarm clock beside the bed which in waking one in the morning automatically closes the window while simultaneously the coffee pot boils.

Third Avenue is teeming with antique shops that have been promoted from junk shops to become gaudy editions of their 57th Street superiors. Lower Fourth Avenue is devoted entirely to book shops, row on row of them. Clothes, made for garage mechanics, stevedores and dock labourers, are as inexpensive as they are romantic at the various branches of the Army and Navy Stores: Michelangelo himself might have designed the football sweaters, the coloured leather jackets and the elaborate wind-breakers. From the shop that sells only books on the history of boxing, from the butterfly store, from the popcorn and nut counters (perhaps with the image of Abraham Lincoln in pecans) to Duveen's collection of tapestry brought from Pavlosk, and the Hammer Galleries' treasures of Imperial Russia, New York shops provide a display that dazzles the European visitor.

The window-dressing is one of the city's chief features. The displays at Lord and Taylor's or Bonwit Teller's have brought about

a style of presentation that utilizes surrealist and neo-romantic effects with great taste, and creates peepshows which are almost works of art in themselves. Each new fashion lives brilliantly, but dies a weekly death as it gives way to the next display.

Just as New Yorkers are ruthless in discarding last season's face or dress, so they hold no sentimental feeling for their possessions. There are few old attic collections in New York.

Since addresses change so often, and that indefinable thing called "taste" seems to be so elusive, the professional decorators reap great gains from their clients' lack of assurance. Interior decorating was invented as a profession by Elsie de Wolf. Nowadays a slump in certain stocks, a suicide in the family, or merely a divorce, are enough to change a normal woman into an authority on Empire settees, Sheffield plate, Adam fireplaces and flower prints. These decorating ladies have their lairs by the dozen along Madison Avenue. The grandest achieves an address on 57th Street, and the influence they exert spreads throughout the country.

v

Fifty million pounds of food are consumed every twenty-four hours by New Yorkers. The American eats his food almost everywhere in New York City except in his own home. Dining-rooms seldom exist in Manhattan's small apartments. A city man never goes home for lunch, and, rather than have a cut off the joint, will snatch a snack at a grill or sandwich bar, or at the nearest Childs, with a glass of chocolate malted milk. He takes his meals fluidly, for his coffee and iced water are served simultaneously with the soup. The coffee is usually weak, and the tea, wrapped like lavender in a muslin or paper bag, is bad, and the water seldom hot enough.

Since Oliver Cromwell's twelve years of vinegar rule, English cooking has been proverbially bad, yet nothing can be better than plain English produce well prepared. In New York, the food is intrinsically tasteless, and, in order to make it appetizing, skill is essential on the part of every cook. Even before it went into the refrigerator, the waterlogged lettuce-heart would have tasted of little but paper, so the cook, knowing it is up to him to make the food palatable by the concoction of sauces and titbits, reserves his highest flight of fancy for the lettuce. Unrecognizable under its sousing of

Russian dressing, it is squashed beneath half a pear on which is balanced a slice of pineapple (or does the pineapple come under the pear?). A pinnacle of cream cheese coated with cayenne pepper balances on a prune, and on the summit stands a cherry. The temptation of the American cook is always to drown the sensitiveness of the palate with these highly seasoned mixtures, and the individual oyster stands no chance against the tomato-ketchup.



The English hide at their meals as if eating were something immoral, but here, in broad daylight in a shop window, the American shamelessly eats his sea-food, his olives, his celery and his salad course. New Yorkers were the first to eat ice-cream when it was sold by Mr. Hall in 1786, and grown men will never lose their liking for it. But of first importance to the American is the cleanliness of his food. Sugar is hermetically sealed, biscuits and cookies are done up in cellophane, sandwiches wrapped in grease-proof paper. The waiters in sandwich bars and restaurants resemble dentists or operating surgeons in their white uniforms. Perhaps this is why New York is one of the few cities in which white eggs are considered preferable to brown and are paid for at a premium.

At luncheon time, the counters at the drugstore fill up with

customers. There are a number of sandwiches from which to choose—"egg salad", "minced ham", "combination sandwiches". Fruit pies, soups and sundaes appear in gastronomical disorder along the counter.

Dostoevsky describes a favourite trick that was customary in Russia. When the temperature was a sufficient number of degrees below zero, a victim was invited to lick an axe, to which his tongue became automatically frozen. So the lips of the patrons of New York drugstores appear to remain permanently attached to the rims of glasses containing the freezing streams of chocolate to which they subject their tired stomachs. Just as in Mexico food is peppered to excess, so in New York all drinks are over-iced. Ice is as much an obsession to the Americans as curry to the Indians. One cannot but feel an overt sympathy for the old man on the baby's high-chair who thus for forty years must have been corroding his alimentary canal and stomach. The helpless gut suffers, unheeded and unfelt, for the momentary pleasure during which the frost passes into the throat.

Some Americans proudly announce that they have never eaten in a drugstore, and it is true that there is something innately disagreeable about perching at a counter to dispatch a meal in five minutes. One feels that time should be taken in preparing food, that a proper meal should come from a kitchen and be eaten at a table, that it should not be hastily thrown together as one watches. The activity at the gas stove, the fusion of certain recognized ingredients served with iced water or a Coca-Cola, does not seem to be cooking in the gastronomic sense. Drugstore food tends to be tasteless, but the drugstore is ideal if at any moment one is feeling vaguely hungry and wants something more than a bar of chocolate and a cigarette. The three- or four-tiered club sandwich is probably one of the best products of the "synthetic meal" mentality—the gastronomic equivalent of the skyscraper in architecture.

In Europe, where sweets, books, lunches, medicines, alarm clocks, rubber goods and cigarettes are, or were, bought at different places, the drugstore would be inappropriate. But in America the familiar red neon sign of "Drugs—Soda" in every town and village represents the centralization and "service" that makes one feel New York such an easy place to live in.

Few of America's "soda-fountain clerks" have either the intention

or desire of remaining such for long. The soda-fountain, feature of every American drugstore, is often merely the overture to life for these youths who despise "soda-jerking" as such. That is why so many surround themselves with an aura of intellect coupled with virility, expressed to their customers in a crackling backchat, with some knowledgeably epicurean remark thrown in here and there.

The girl on the stool beside you orders a double Chocolate Malted Milk Shake. The clerk bustles about in starched white apron and glengarry, pouring the ingredients into an aluminium mixing-can, his manner efficiently scientific. The concoction is served with a glass of iced water, a paper napkin, a cellophane-wrapped cookie and straws. The straws sink into the brown foam and the liquid rises up them, through the rounded lips and down the avid gullet. The jerker watches intently. "Laikert?" he asks confidently. The girl goes on sucking. "Well, say something," he persists. Smiling only with her eyes, vaguely and easily, without coyness, she says, "Oh, I give it O.K." The jerker professes chagrin at her indifference and tries the intellectual touch. "Well, what's your conception?" he asks with an amiable wink at the doctor waiting for a prescription.

"My conception is you oughta be doin' better'n joikin' if this is all you can turn out."

"Sure, we all oughta be doin' better'n soda-jerkin', eh, Doc?"

The soda-jerkers and the cafeteria and restaurant waiters have developed their own cryptic slang, condensed to save time when orders are shouted back to the cook or counter-man. This slang varies somewhat in different locales, but it inevitably reflects that sense of humour which is so peculiarly American. Thus, when the waiter shouts for an order of "Mexican heart-burn", the cook knows that he means chile-con-carne. Scrambled eggs are "Scramble two!" During the war, eggs were called "convoys", and the waiter perhaps yelled: "Couple of convoys." If the customer suddenly changed his mind and wanted his eggs scrambled, a terse agenda of "Scuttle 'em" was sufficient to inform the cook. Coffee was called "blackout", and if the customer wanted cream the waiter would add "blitz it". An order of hash prompts the ominous, "Here's a guy wants to take a chance!" This slang is continually changing, and often has political references of the day, corn-meal muffins sometimes being named after a politician whose tactics have been "corny".

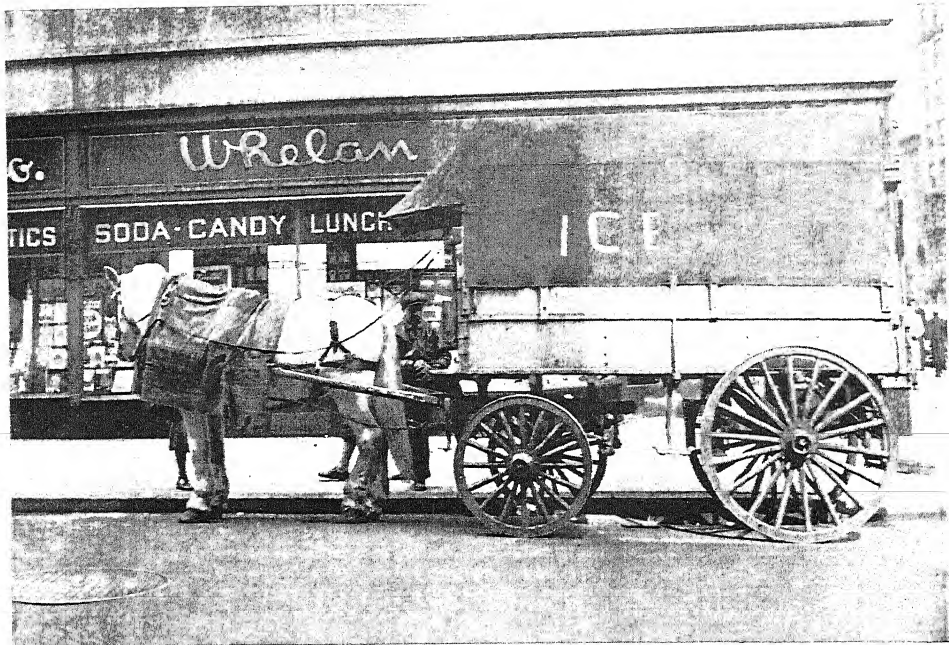
The Automat represents a high point in civilization. Here, *en masse* yet in pleasant conditions, people can eat well at surprisingly small cost.

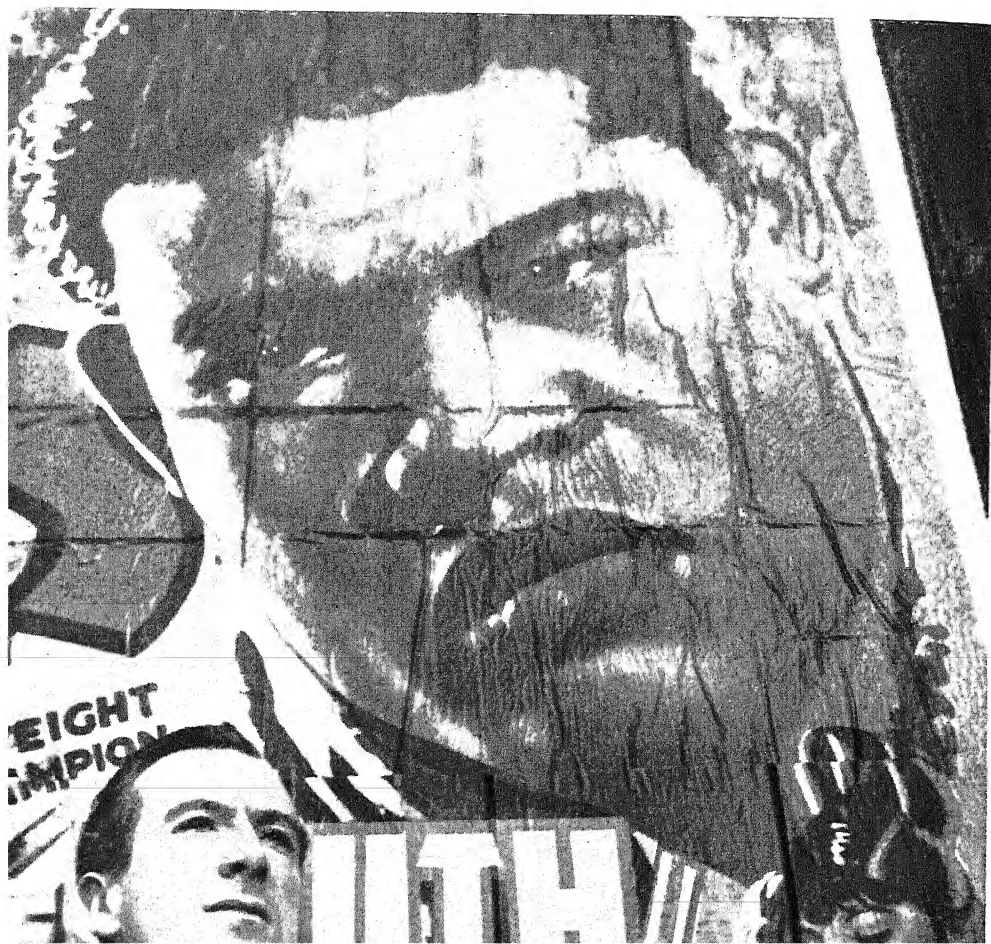
England's equivalent would be a restaurant with greasy table-tops, coarse and chipped crockery, a severely limited choice of unnourishing, almost inedible food, served intermittently by defiant, tired-out waitresses.

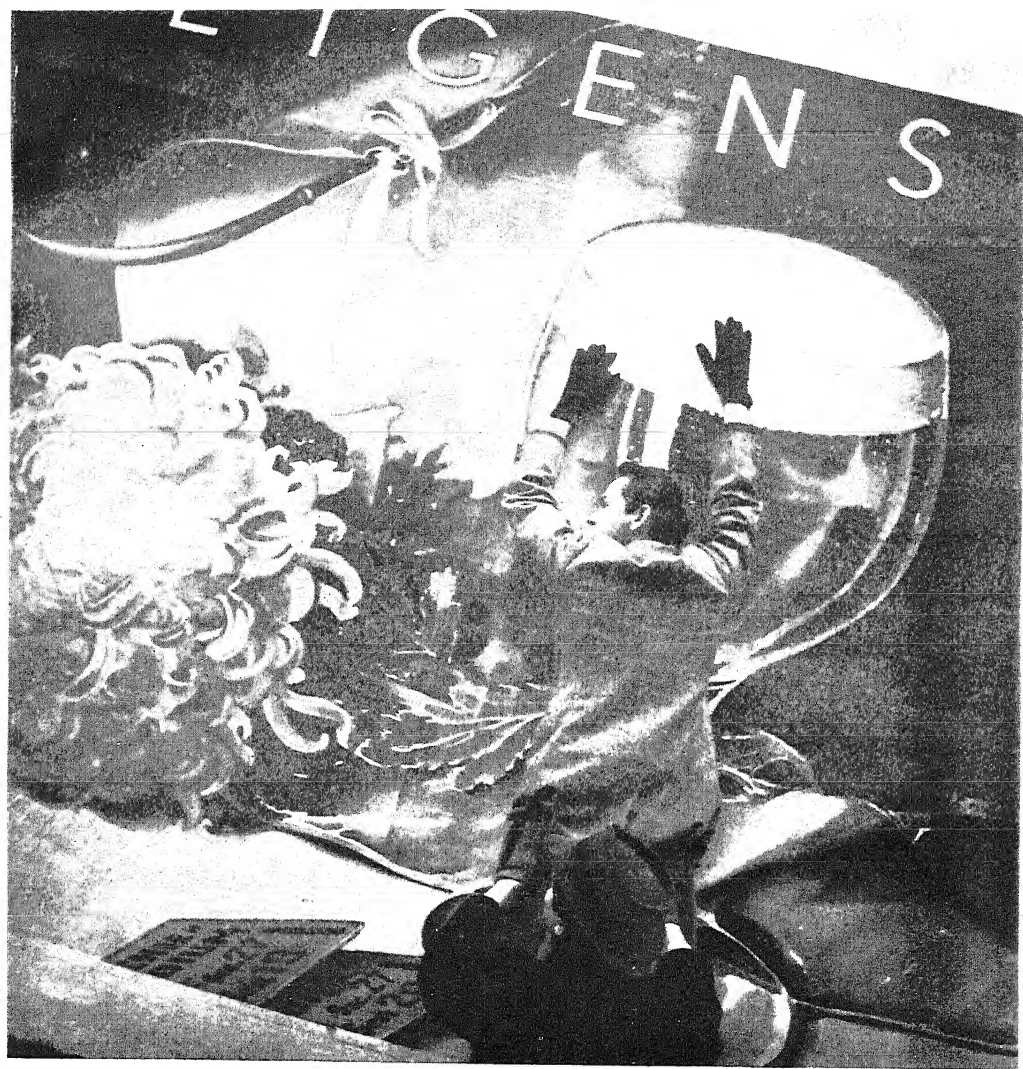
The Automat has a clinical cleanliness—the tables are washed continuously, even the slots through which the nickels pass are polished many times a day. Around the marble walls are rows of dishes, each an appetizing still-life framed in chromium.

Apple-pie rests in one brilliantly lit frame, in the next a rich slice of raisin cake is the *objet de vitrine*, in another a sandwich, neatly wrapped in opalescent paper. How much more satisfactory to see such food than to read smudgily printed descriptions on a pasteboard menu. The variety of food is wide: there are aluminium counters where visible attendants serve hot meals and vegetables in exchange for coins inserted in a glass change-slot in front of the counter. For a few nickels you can eat out-of-season fruit, *leberwurst* on rye bread, a cut off the roast, or a marshmallow cup-cake. An arrangement of Russian salad, cole slaw, cream cheese and saltines is yours for a few cents. Another nickel brings a cup of coffee, in black and foaming-white jets, in exactly sufficient quantities, from a golden spout; or a pot of freshly brewed tea, shooting into view on a swivel like a conjurer's trick, placed there by the unseen hand of the Trappist monk-like attendant. Returning with the booty to the table brings a feeling of pioneer satisfaction and an interest in the display of individual tastes. To be able to walk out without wasting time in further accounting or interminable waiting for bills gives a pleasant feeling of freedom.

No foreigner exiled in New York need remain at home for his national atmosphere. Whether he be from Canton or Bucharest, Stockholm or Marseilles, he is certain to find, somewhere in Manhattan, a restaurant to transport him to the gastronomical delights of home. The alien has his choice of Hungarian restaurants, Turkish, Russian, Greek, Armenian, or Syrian with their *paklava* and honey sweets. In the Hindu restaurants the coffee is thickly Turkish, the bread is Bengalese, the meats are spiced and skewered, the fruits









SHOP FACADES



and flowers candied. He will find that Ruby Foo's, on Broadway, has soup made from the spittle of tubercular birds, and other equally imaginative, deliciously cooked foods, characteristic of the lesser-known Chinese *cuisine*. He will find German restaurants where initials are gouged into scrubbed wooden table-tops, and frankfurters and beer are served in real old-country fashion. At Luchow's, with frescoes of *The Ring*, the food is as fine as any in pre-war Germany, and goose-fat is served instead of butter. In Swedish restaurants he will find arrays of *smorgasbord* extensive enough to hide a billiard-table. He may eat Indian curries with a still-life of Buddha and pear-shaped musical instruments in front of him; or sit in an old pew eating mutton chops and Stilton cheese at the Chop House on Cedar Street, with sawdust on the floor and violins decorating the walls. Most of the English restaurants are of the "Olde Worlde" variety. Almost every nation is represented with its native atmosphere and specialities.

A number of the American restaurants have a "group" atmosphere. Bleek's is a hang-out for the reporters from the *Herald-Tribune*; while Julius', in Greenwich Village, is frequented at cocktail hour by the intellectuals from the *Partisan Review* and *Politics* magazine. The *Cordon Bleu* only serves lunch, and is not merely a restaurant but a cook-school as well. The customers are allowed to cook, eat, and then pay for their own lunch.

The New Yorker has little taste for wine; hardly surprising, perhaps, since few wines taste well in his city. But he loves to drink for the effects of drink. It is curious that no theatre possesses its own bar except for soft drinks, and during the few minutes of the intervals obscure taverns down the street enjoy a brief, but inflated, popularity. Of the countless, oddly named brands of liquor that he buys, few are good. The best beer is difficult to select from so many rival brands. The cocktail served before dinner is strong enough to carry him through the ice-water age to the haven of the whisky and soda afterwards. Serious drinking is reserved, in full earnest, for the week-ends. Each Saturday evening brings a run on the wine and spirit stores. No liquor is sold on a Sunday morning, even in an hotel, and when the bars are opened at 1 p.m., queues have already formed of victims of hangovers who wish to pile Pelion on Ossa. For those who are more obsessed with their drinking, ferries will

carry them to New Jersey, where drinking continues all night long. On Saturday nights, or rather at 3 a.m. Sunday morning, the ferries are crowded with "lost week-enders".

VI

American newspapers and periodical publications may some day eat up all the forests of the world. One issue alone of the *Saturday Evening Post* consumes more than twenty-four wooded acres.

On Sunday, with breakfast, comes a huge and sphinx-like bundle of papers, neatly folded, layer on wad. Breakfast waits the investigation. A curious smell emanates from the bundle, remotely peppery, which turns out to be the *New York Sunday Times*—"All the News that's Fit to Print"—*all* of it. Interested, I begin on the first section, determined to scan rapidly the general news before beginning on breakfast.

It is all very lively: so much is happening. But there are alluring advertisements to trap the unwary—sunny pictures of Palm Beach, priceless fur coats, shoes, hats and pretty names like Saks and Bonwit. I prop myself comfortably on the right elbow, breakfast forgotten as progress continues steadily through the first section's fifty-six close-packed pages. Several headings give one to think—milk is up to twenty-one cents, someone has "earmarked 18,000,000 dollars funds", the "President is lining up against the union leader in a big strike". But too much of the *Times* lies ahead to allow time to ponder.

Another section, more general news, more headlines that are only vaguely intelligible to the foreigner. Obituaries, news of mails and ships, wills, estates, plaintive appeals in the Lost and Found columns. I have accounted for sixty-eight pages, trying to remember if London's *Sunday Times* could offer in all six or eight pages.

Section three lands us in Wall Street, ten pages of financial and commercial sensations. The strain on the outstretched arm begins to tell, and I relax a little, giving section one the chance to collapse its bulk on the bed-covers. Little interests me in the "Letters to the Editor", for, in spite of their pungent terms, I cannot take sides in these battles, of which I know nothing. Week-end cables and a maze of special articles help me to the review of the week's news, and so out of section four.

Reading this gigantic newspaper becomes a sort of game or endurance test, a task a Spartan mother might well assign her son if she lived in New York to-day. The elbow tingles and I consider a change of posture, only to realize the absurdity of the idea when I see that sections one to four have taken complete possession of the other side of the bed. To move them would mean upheaval. The game begun, retreat is impossible.

Twelve pages of sports news, bold headlines largely incomprehensible, pictures of a great American football war in progress, armoured warriors arrested in unbelievable attitudes by the camera; horses, dogs, harriers, a ball-game—and so on to news of society. Dishes to tempt youthful palates at sub-debs' parties, fashions for all ages, all sizes; a gallery of those strangely depersonalized young women who appear in pageants for charity; a "Bal de Fete for Lighthouse Eye Clinic to be featured by showing of coiffures"; "Rebecca du Bois Bows to Society"; someone is to be an attorney's bride, someone else is to be honoured by a "shower"; debbs are planning a tea—and, with a great subsidence, the news of Wall Street, the advertisements for Palm Beach, the footballing warriors, describe an ungainly arc between bed and floor.

Irritably I acknowledge the fact that women's clubs have an active week ahead of them, that passion-flowers prove hardy, that gardeners are well looked after by the editorial board of the *Times*, that "Mrs. Grace Coyle will speak on Flower Arrangements According to the Zodiac at a meeting of the Garden Department of the Women's Club of Great Neck on Monday at 3 p.m." My spine aches intolerably and I take time out, deciding to make a rough count of the number of pages offered by this Sunday colossus. Thirteen sections, most of them more than ten pages, brings the fantastic total up to two hundred and thirty-two.

Embarking on the seventh section, my arm is grateful for its smaller format in spite of its forty pages. Book reviews by the dozen, yet all so charitable, so benevolent. They are hearty readers here, and the reviewer's job appears to be that of guide and friend to the publisher rather than the reader. These forty pages seem to have little critical content. They announce innumerable books on authors, and books written about books on authors, and so on and on. Potting the classics appears to be a great New York publishers' pastime.

Breakfast still uneaten, remembered and forgotten again. Standing an hour would hardly have improved it, anyway. Desperately, the pillows are rearranged, though my arm is beyond such simple aids as a change of position. Only a major operation, even amputation, could help it now.

A magazine section: complete short story by a well-known author; articles on industry, science, alcoholism. Colour photographs of easy-to-prepare casserole dishes for the busy housewife.

The bed is lost in the avalanche of paper, but determination carries me through to the ninth section—this one in rotogravure. Reward at last, like the currant in the bun, the prize in the bran-tub. These pages feel wet and cool to the touch, and in them history passes in review: John L. Lewis is fined for contempt of court; new jet-propelled planes to be used exclusively by the British Air Force; President Truman on his morning walk; Washington State has a prize apple harvest; the Potomac is lovely with cherry blossom again in Washington, D.C.

More advertisements, calculated to terrify readers into purchases, just in case. . . .

Dance, radio, art, screen, music, theatre. Half a page about Hollywood's latest discovery. All the glitter of New York entertainment. Another half-hour gone by.

Enthusiasm, revived by rotogravure, stimulated by gaiety, flags at last in a welter of hobbies, stamps, resort and travel advertisements, cruise suggestions. Even the fact that I am "cordially invited to spend a glorious winter in Bermuda" cannot arouse me now. The crick in my neck subsides to the pelvis. Wall Street, the general news and the footballers, together with the mass of discarded sections, fall to the floor.

Two sections shout the delights of every housing estate within thirty miles of Manhattan. "Builder must sacrifice English home on large plot near Larchmont." Sympathy is called for, but further investigation of the page reveals an astonishing welter of sacrifice, a sort of masochistic epidemic among house-owners. There are sacrifices at Great Neck, a genuine sacrifice at 65,000 dollars, and so the list grows. By telephoning Gibraltar 7-6595 you can learn all you want to know about "a beautiful home for people fond of outdoor life". Apartments Wanted in Manhattan, and Apartments



SUNDAY NEWSPAPERS





for Exchange; almost nothing under Apartments for Rent. And columns of "Help Wanted"! Only too true—the bed, the breakfast tray, myself, utterly submerged by the *Sunday Times*. Exhausted, I contemplate helplessly the vast paper tent that envelops me. The room is newspaper, the newspaper is the room.

I turn to sleep again, but the idea is futile, for it is already lunch-time. It always is time for lunch when the *Sunday Times* has been read.

So many and varied are New York's magazines that millions of people have neither the time nor the inclination to read anything else. For the average man, a judicious selection of them can provide liberal amusement and adequate intellectual stimulation.

Practically no law of libel exists in America; it is almost impossible to bring a suit against a newspaper; but the press must, if it is to maintain its circulation, for ever be in awe of the inarticulate sanction of large minorities. In the last hundred years the population of New York has been swelled by many different nationalities whose feelings must not be hurt. Their existence forces the editors to a certain policy. A newspaper can express strong political views, but it cannot be obvious in showing racial or national prejudices without losing circulation.

Headlines are the apex of American journalism. The newcomer to New York is often bewildered by them. Their language would baffle the builders of the Tower of Babel. We read "Waiting for Lefty" under a photograph of the heads of the British and American Governments waiting for Premier Stalin of Soviet Russia to arrive on the scene of a conference. "Policeman becomes Love Thief", another headline screams. "Forgery Rap Starts Tales" means that a conviction for forgery prompted the accused to tell the police conflicting stories. *Variety*, the theatrical magazine, is a coiner of language, and only initiates can understand the mint for new phraseology: STICKS PIX HICKS NIX means inhabitants of hick-towns (i.e. small provincial towns) do not enjoy seeing movie pictures about the rough country, such as forests, deserts or other rural regions of adventure.

STAGE-SCREEN COMBO PULLS SOCK 105 IN FIRST FRAME AT PARAMOUNT is a condensation of the information that the combined attraction of a movie and stage show at the Paramount Theatre is

responsible for the enormous business of 105,000 dollars in the first week's run.

Among the magazines, the *New Yorker* has created a tradition of American humour in the manner that *Punch*, for its antediluvian readers, provides a sense of continuity in British humour. Full of surprises, fresh, spontaneous and vital, it is astounding that so successful a weekly magazine can survive without apparent bowing to advertisers or to the vulgarity of public taste.

A thick, glossy magazine, *Esquire*, advertises itself ambiguously as being "for men only". *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* are the fashion magazines, advertising a vast amount of merchandise in each issue, and allowing nothing to escape their ravenous appetite for *chic*. Oddly enough, it is in these pages that some of the best American writing is to be found, and short stories and novelettes by such now famous "unusual" talent as Carson McCullers and Eudora Welty first appeared in the *Bazaar*, while *Vogue's* pages are adorned with the most *avant-garde* names in European literature. In spite of the recent deterioration in newsprint, *Vogue* maintains the immaculate standard of presentation originated in this field by Mr. Condé Nast.

Mr. Henry Luce's magazines have earned him the reputation of being the "white-headed boy" among publishers. *Life* is an astonishing fifteen cents worth. No attempt is made to make it an art magazine: the staff photographers are trained to "cover" each subject intellectually, dramatically and psychologically. Many of their astonishing and sometimes appallingly stark documents have influenced other magazines. *Fortune*, selling at a dollar a copy, is the advertising medium for those with enormous purchasing powers. Full of graphic information about big firms and economic statistics, it is famous for its surveys of "who smokes what" or "who votes for whom". It portrays the mechanics of a civilization. *Time*, the third of Mr. Luce's journalistic trinity, is read by less people than those who look at *Life*, and is liked by less people, but with mongrel cunning and cleverness, yaps, snaps and bites at the postman. It utilizes backstairs information that is always accurate and spares no feelings in creating its brilliance. Every reader must quail lest his turn for a roasting may come one day. *Time* has invented a technique of writing which gives even to triviality a general importance, and by which it is possible to be rude with seeming innocuousness.

Time's style is distinguished chiefly by its packed adjectives: "hard-working, polo-amateur, avocado-loving X. Y. Stevens". Its political news summary is condensed and snappy and its imitators in England completely lack its brilliant lustre. *Newsweek* is similar in format to *Time*.

Other picture magazines include *Look*, *Pic* and *Click*. A dozen pocket-edition magazines have appeared since the success of the *Reader's Digest*, which condenses articles from various magazines, and even foreshortens best-seller fiction and non-fiction books. And in the last few years pocket-books, unabridged work of the classics, published in handy pocket format for twenty-five cents, have had a remarkable success, and have since degenerated to a money-making level of unending mystery and detective tales. Each month brings on to the news-stand a fresh crop of magazines. Moving-picture magazines have now developed their own yellow journalism.

Gourmet is a magazine for cooks. The nudists have a magazine of their own, untouched by the censors. A vast sea of pulp magazines, selling for ten or fifteen cents, is designed for a depressingly moronic majority and called *True Confessions*, *True Romances* or *True Detective*.

The New Masses and *The Nation*, liberal or left-wing, emphasizing political thought, are the *avant-garde* magazines, and the literary reviews, *Partisan Review*, *Kenyon Review* and *View*, edited by the poet Charles Henri Ford, avoid academicism, and publish stories, poetry, essays and reproductions of the art work of primitives, neo-romantics and Surrealists.

VII

In New York, flowers have become the graceful and artificial token of a social system. Flowers are sent by Americans on the slightest provocation. A dinner or an illness is excuse for two dozen roses. Flowers are sent on birthdays, on holidays, on Valentine's Day, on Mother's Day. New Yorkers "say it with flowers", flowers are sent by telegraph. Ladies buy flowers for their own houses from a shop where they know they are fresh and cheap, but if they are sending a present, it must go in a florist's box stamped with an address which is considered smart.

It is understandable that New Yorkers, who scarcely see a blade

of grass or a tree unless it be in a park, should love to buy flowers. Yet here, the flowers themselves (like some of the people) have forgotten nature, and enter heartily into the artifices of a sophisticated society. In London we have the barrows from Covent Garden as harbingers of spring, the first salad, fresh tulips and, expressing June, the marguerites and geraniums in earthenware pots. In Paris the cut-flower markets are the joy of all passers-by. In Rome the old women under their striped awnings sell the large bunches of colour on the steps of the Piazza del Popolo. In each country the flowers seem to have their own character and nationality, but in New York flower-shop windows there is a prodigious richness of flora that is irrespective of clime or country. In the ice-rooms, gardenias and camellias are arranged in rows and lie in drawers, like artificial blooms in a draper's store. Rooms are stacked with bundles of flowers not yet in bloom. Other ice-rooms are reserved entirely for roses. Upstairs, the flowers radiate light and perfume, and orchids are parasites in the strange plant-life of a tropical jungle of blossom and bloom. Trees with enormous leaves are obscurely named; plants and ferns are made to grow out of peculiar-shaped bark; mimosa trees, with more delicate filigree than those that grow in the South, are forced to a height of ten feet. A whole orchard of apple-blossom has been potted and, on Lincoln's birthday, the assistant says: "You want something to send to a lady? We can offer you tulips, lilies of the valley, sweet peas, daisies; there's some nice peach and pear blossom; lilies—amaryllis, calla and madonna—dogwood, snapdragon, forsythia, gladioli, anemones, daffodils. Hyacinth are nice just now, or cinerarias, carnations, delphiniums, pussy-willow, acacia, violets, ranunculus, tuberose, genista, ivy, pansies, stocks and phlox."

Occasionally the New Yorker motors, past the waste tracks and dump-yards, to the country. He has been reading Daniel Denton's charming old-world account of the flowers of Manhattan. "The Herbs which the Country naturally afford are Purslain, white Orage, Egrimony, Violets, Penniroyal, Aslicampane, besides Saxparilla very common, with many more, Yea, in May you shall see the Woods and Fields so curiously bedecked with Roses and innumerable multitude of delightful Flowers." To-day what does he see? He sees what a mess nature makes of it when she tries to copy art.

VIII

It is difficult to find any reliable guide to the psychology of a nation. Radio in America provides as detailed and accurate a one as we can ever hope to have, for thirty-four million homes—roughly 85 per cent of America—are equipped with radio sets. Radio audiences outnumber cinema audiences eight times over.

Such a multitude of listeners, almost the entire population, invites investigation, and in the United States the most elaborate and detailed inquiries are constantly being made. In this way broadcasting literally has a chance to provide "what the public wants". Advertisers have not been slow to exploit so gigantic a medium, and in the past year they bought almost one hundred and ninety-one million dollars' worth of broadcasting time on the major networks (the talent hired to fill programmes cost two hundred and ten million dollars). Competition has brought entertainment to a presumably high level, but with radio cynics estimating the average level of adult intelligence as being equivalent to that of an eleven-year-old child, the discerning will find the programmes occasionally silly and frequently banal.

Nevertheless, competition in the United States produces a contemporary quality, a vitality beside which the B.B.C. becomes feebly remote from life. Perhaps it is the standardized pseudo-cultured and punctilious supercilious indifference of the English announcer's voice that robs even the news of actuality, and creates an effect as of listening to an account of something that had happened thirty-five years ago.

New York's programmes often comprise serial and complete dramas, "quiz" programmes, bathetic prose recitations against the organ, hill-billy glee-singers, beauty talks and cooking talks and political talks, floridly dramatic orchestras, too much Victor Herbert, too much Lady Esther—but the WQXR Station is devoted exclusively to classical and serious modern music.

To "take the housewife out of herself" while she scrubs, scours and washes, full-blooded dramas are enacted during the day. In serial form, they follow the day-to-day tribulations of their leading women characters. They are "cliff hangers" who are usually left in some impending crisis, or with an insoluble problem, which will be

solved to-morrow, only to be succeeded by further dilemmas. In these dramas the head of the sound department comes into his own. His is one of innumerable trades created by radio. His ears are attuned to the most delicate nuances of sound. A recording company may bring him forty records and he knows that, of them all, only the fire-alarm bell is genuine and not produced in a studio. In a cinema he need not close his eyes to decide whether a film's sound would pass muster on the air (and generally it would not), for he is sensitive to the perspective of sound. He recognizes, for example, the sounds of an aeroplane revving up, taxi-ing over the tarmac, taking off, precisely as they will strike the ear from the different vantage points of the cockpit and of the tarmac, both from behind and in front of the machine.

This man is an artist in sound, and no good artist is careless. On one occasion fifty records were made before he considered he had achieved accurately enough the dead whistle of a siren in fog. To record surf entailed more than a visit to the seashore with a recording machine. For five nights technicians went to the shore, and five times the surf did not sound like surf. Each night something was missing, the wind was in the wrong quarter or the waves were too high to create the true impression of the sound recorded. On the sixth night the microphone was placed at the waves' edge, on a floating raft and at the end of a jetty, but only when floated on a tin reflector was the surf sound of the long, peaceful roll, the splash, the gurgling backwash of the last and smallest wave captured to satisfy the expert.

The sound engineer is of the utmost importance, and commands an enormous salary. Toscanini may conduct a hundred men in his own inimitable way, but it is for the engineer to assure the music's fine and true transmission.

The sound engineer has studied his job scientifically. He has acquired another sense so acutely developed that it makes us realize how little we use our ears. Our ears select sounds. When we throw up the window in New York, it is only for a brief moment that we hear the composite roar of the traffic below; soon our ears sift only the separate hoots and screams which contribute to the noisy whole. The sound artist must simulate these noises so that we are able to identify them with those we hear in our minds. Radio authors are

fully conscious of the aid that sound can give their work, remembering always that the audience, like a Greek chorus, is omnipresent. It is beside the railroad track when the smash happens and in the bar-room when the shots are fired. Some script writers, however, expect a little too much and have been known to request "the sound of falling snow" and "the sound of a horse idling".

Like an Olympian bartender, the chief sound-master sits at a huge, L-shaped table, mixing his astonishing sound cocktails. His table is fitted with ever-revolving gramophone discs, amplifiers of all sorts, and an array of inexplicable gadgets. Before him on a stand is his score, his role heavily outlined in pencil; on his head is a microphone. Silently he runs from one end of the table to tap a water-filled brandy bottle with a champagne glass. The script calls for a murder, so he fires the revolvers he holds in either hand, and throws a sandbag to the floor, following it with a double jump. He runs to a door framed on a stanchion, kicks it with his heel, rattles the knob, and swings back to the table to let off three blank cartridges. He clicks his nails close to the microphone to represent the sound of handcuffs being snapped on.

The play's hero, speaking into the microphone, has a rich, fruit-cake voice, but he is small and weedy, unsuited to the part for stage, screen or television.

Rehearsal ends. The actors relax. "Gee, I've been spitting all over my script."

They place a memorial to one of the characters to-day "bumped off" in the serial, saying wistfully: "It was a nice salary."

IX

America is primarily a country of advertisements. Advertisements fill the radio programmes with their clamorous exhortations. Doctors give testimonials for cigarette advertisements; movie stars attest to the fact that they use a certain face soap, mascara or deodorizer. Book matches, bearing the names of shops, hotels and restaurants, accumulate so that the activities of the past week can be traced to create a sort of match diary. These matches, carried around from one place to another, are the commercial seeds unwittingly planted by the person to whom they were given, as birds carry seeds in their feet picked up from where they last alighted.

American advertisements have always been startlingly frank, and billboards, train and bus "ads" and radio commercials come right out and call a spade a spade. We have grown accustomed to the warnings against Body Odour (B.O.) and Halitosis (Till Breath do us Part). But judging from the space allotted in the magazines, American men must be crotch-bound, and in need of "Modern Masculinized Underwear" or "Supported Underpants which fit smoothly without binding". To-day the crotch is given enormous publicity, jockey-shorts are mandatory, and come in various lengths: briefs, half-lengths to the knee, and full-lengths to the ankle.

Even the sky is used as a medium for advertisement. "Pepsi-cola" is written perpendicularly, and the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer blimp looks like a dilatory shooting-star as it flies over Times Square at night, with moving photo-electric lettering advertising the latest movie sensation.

The "singing commercial" has become so popular in the last few years that listening to the radio for any length of time is a most exquisite form of torture. A woman's voice proudly sings: "I go for a man who wears an Adam Hat"; we are told in a jingle-jangle that "Pepsi-cola hits the spot, Twelve-ounce bottle counts a lot, Twice as much for a nickel too, You know Pepsi is the thing for you." Perhaps even more horrible are the singing advertisements for wine.

In billboards, on the sides of buildings, in subways and buses, these are some of the advertisements on which the eye alights: "It's A-B-C easy: Always buy Chesterfield." "Quick to cook—Quick to nourish—Quick to click with all the Family" (a breakfast food). This has a kind of dactylic, inane charm.

"Goodman's Passover Matzohs recommended by all leading Rabbis."

"For the smile of beauty—Ipana and massage."

"When underarm odour clings, men don't. So play safe with MUM."

"Who's who? You can always count on somebody *who is* somebody, to look like *somebody*! So many times, too, the label in his clothes is Roger Peet's."

"Perfume with the audacity of a shooting star—Fabulous by Charbert."

"HAVE YOU DONE YOUR BEST BY YOUR DEAR DEPARTED? TRY OUR SPECIALITY DEATH SMILES."



LUXURY PAINTED NECKWEAR

In New York the concept of justice is less impersonal and dispassionate than in English courts, where its arbiters, sitting in wigs and taking their time, calculate the value of every statement and fact before allowing them to influence a decision. In American justice, as in French, the human element is all-important. An American court might be likened to the soap-box meetings in Hyde Park, which are a different, but vital, element in the life of the community. English law is sacred and dehumanized, and the mildest protest or opinion expressed in court or outside it may be considered as "contempt" and bring grave consequences. In America the prisoner may answer back, and the fact that he is made to withdraw the remark that the prosecution has a face like a horse nevertheless amuses the jury, and is psychologically prejudicial in his favour. An English judge makes dry, academic jokes. The New York judge, for better or worse, is often more prejudiced than impartial. In court, coats are taken off, people spring to their feet, snapping braces. American law frequently exceeds its jurisdiction, and tries cases which are properly for the psychiatrist and not for criminal law. Sometimes, in spite of psychiatric advice, it pursues criminal prosecution. Recently, a twelve-year-old boy was tried for killing a baby, and convicted of manslaughter. This case should have been handled by psychiatrists and child specialists, and never have reached regular court, attended by the lurid newspaper publicity. There are many such cases yearly, not all of them involving minors, but most of them handled with a hard-and-fast law which obviates the understanding we have developed in the last fifty years in the field of the human mind. If such mis-handlings seem to head in the direction of inhumanity, the much discussed third-degree method of arrest and interrogation falls to the beast level. Although there is not much publicity given to police violence, it is still widely prevalent, denials notwithstanding. Many a police hospital case arrives at Bellevue with fractured arms and bruises on the upper parts of the arms and the head. The police seem especially vicious to non-violent drunks and other arrests: the slightest movement often calls for a blow on the head with the nightstick. Racial discrimination is not uncommon amongst "cops". Minor arrests are given the third degree, in the hope of pinning other unsolved crimes on them. Innocent bystanders to street crimes are often "hauled in" for no reason, and passers-by who instinctively

dawdle out of curiosity are told to: "Get going! This is none of your goddamned business. Now scam before I run you in too!"

About twelve thousand major felonies were committed in the city last year. Many of these crimes were solved and the criminals brought to justice by the efficiency of the New York police force.

Crime is more prevalent in New York than in other American cities, and is also more evident. The lawless gangsters of the 'twenties and early 'thirties are gone: the gangster of to-day operates more subtly, and rarely indulges in "gun play" or street battles. Robberies

are executed with more finesse than they were in the days of fast cars and machine-guns. Gambling constitutes a large source of income for the present-day racketeer; he no longer gets revenue from "protection", and since whisky is legally sold, he operates "dope" rings, or indulges in "black market" activi-



ties, which are lucrative even in the post-war period. Prevalent in New York recently, among the petty criminals, is "mugging", whereby the victim is attacked in hall-ways on dark streets, robbed of his money, or beaten to death. The alertness of the police has curtailed these brutal robberies considerably, and "police scout-cars" conscientiously patrol the metropolitan area at night.

Thousands of ambulance calls are received at a room at Police Headquarters in one day. They include calls to release tree'd cats and persons from stalled elevators, revolving doors and turnstiles. A vast number of radio-equipped police-cars are directed from the police centres. The patrolman earns sixty dollars, or twelve pounds, a week as recompense for his war with law-breakers, and his motto, sometimes leading him into errors, is "Take no chances".

The public's code regarding crime is: "Don't get mixed up in it." This leads to behaviour many an Englishman would consider discreditable, such as hurrying away should one happen on a hold-up or gang fight. No matter how acute his civic sense may be in other

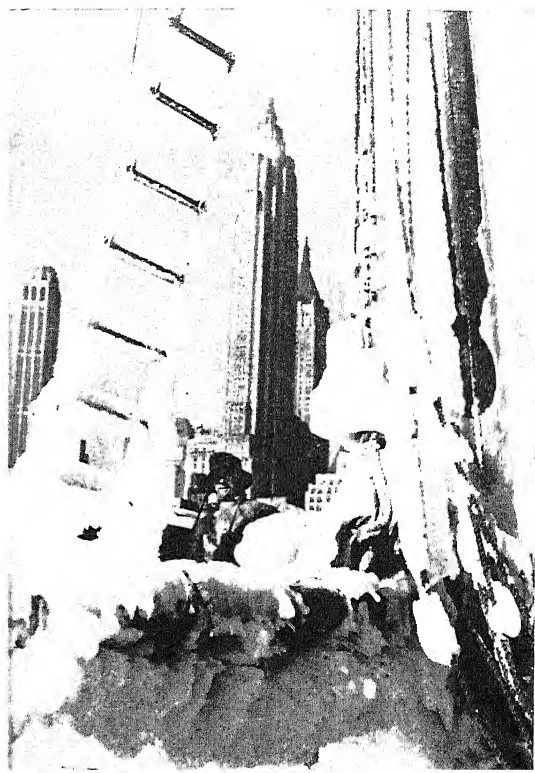
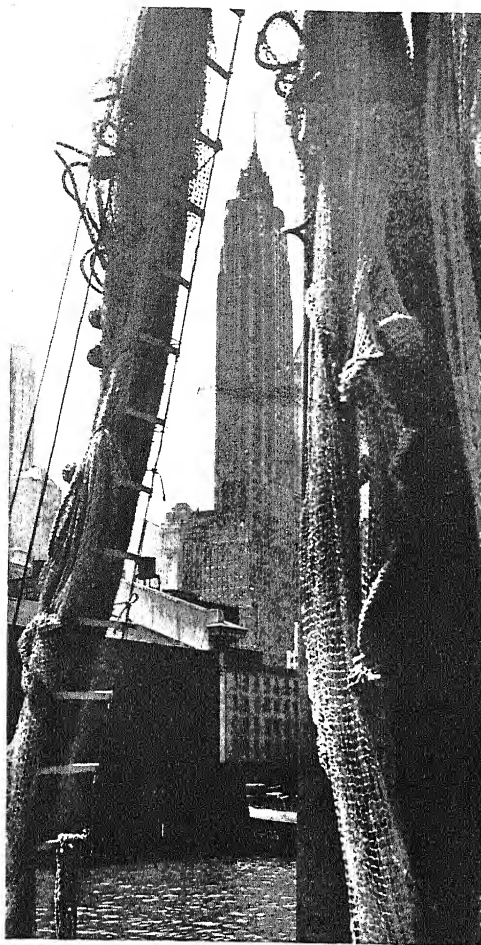
ways, the New Yorker feels he cannot afford to become involved in crime, incurring, as a material witness sometimes does, the risk of reprisals. The police lack co-operation from the public and must do the whole job themselves.

Although the visitor to New York need not expect to encounter crime, it is always possible that he might do so. The taxicab, for example, is not always the symbol of pampered safety that it is in London. For an escort in London to bid good-night to a girl with the phrase, "I'll see you into a cab", has become almost a convention. Danger may even now sometimes lurk in a New York cab, where crooked drivers have been known in the early hours of the morning to tear the earrings from the lobes of the fares' ears. To neglect to see a girl home in New York thus becomes something more than discourteous.

Even before the war, many reasons had been advanced for the prevalence of crimes with violence in New York. The extremes of weather have been blamed, along with the cinema, lack of religion, and lust for wealth. New York has always been, to a certain extent, a disorganized community. A great influx of immigrants, expecting to see streets paved with gold, only found much poverty and little protection in the general fight for wealth. The desire for, and the advantages of, riches were so great that these immigrants, with no feeling of responsibility to this new country and no fear of the legislation of their distant homelands, joined in the increasing corruption. Immigration is now on a smaller scale, but the children of many foreign groups, reared in appalling tenement sections, playing in the streets, having inadequate schooling and vocational guidance, suffering from the harshest extremes of poverty and filth, have an environmental brand marked upon them which is undoubtedly the major cause of both juvenile and adult crimes. The desire for gold leads to corruption in politics, in the police force and in the court room.

So much violence seems oddly paradoxical in America, which does so much in many ways to prevent pain and suffering. Her dentists are the kindest, her maternity homes the most humane. There are a million cures for headaches and indigestion. Material comforts abound in hotels, railways and homes. Yet Americans loathe crime as heartily as anyone. If conditions exist which produce it in brutal intensity, the blame must be placed on the social economy.

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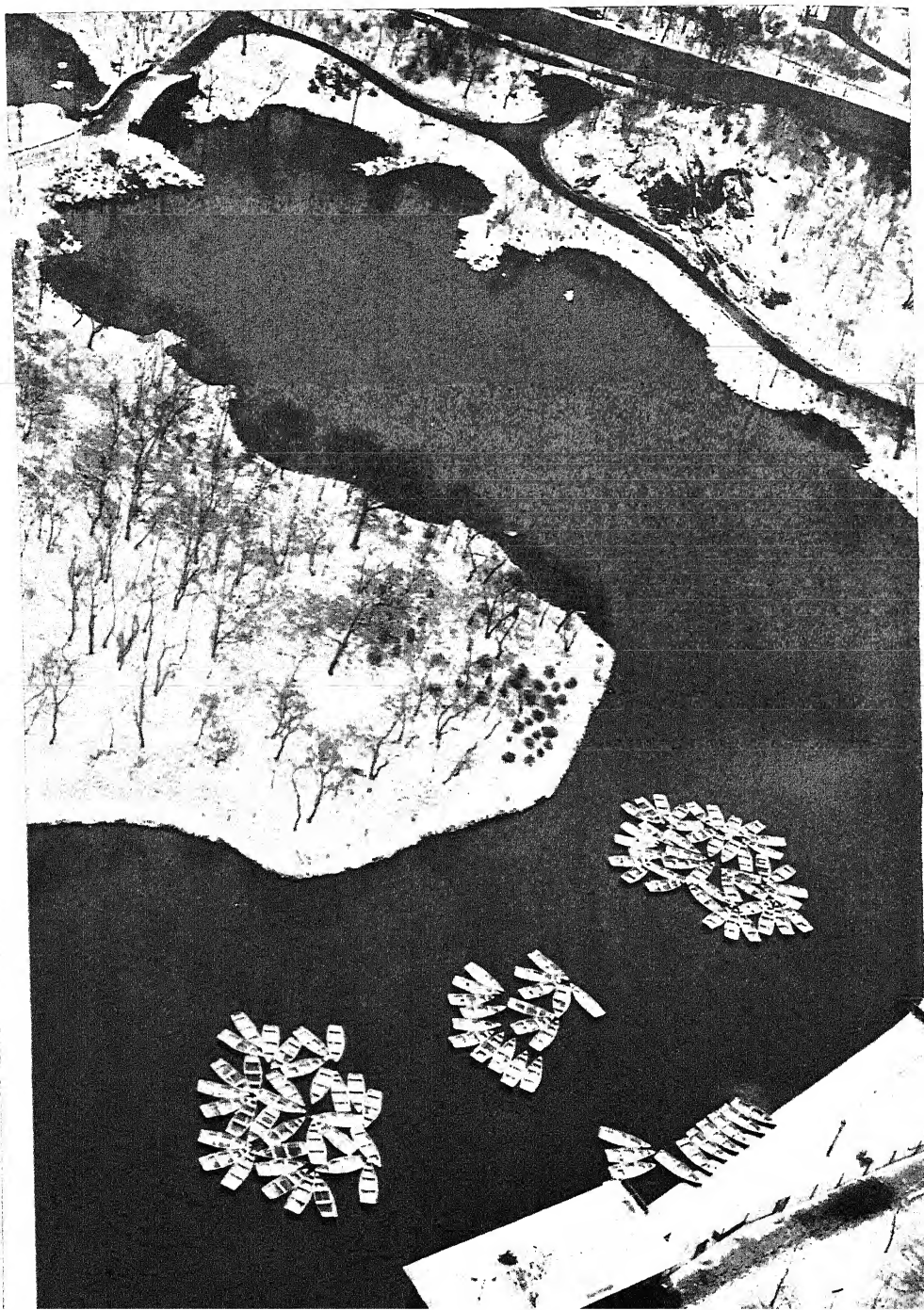
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Every morning at Police Headquarters those arrested during the previous day and night are brought blinking upon a brilliantly lit stage for the "line-up". The melancholy procession passes in front of an audience of gold-badged detectives who watch with varying degrees of amusement the grim reality of this theatre. Most of the culprits are afraid or depressed. Many are poorly dressed in tattered clothing. Some have red, sleepless eyes; others show bruises from having been manhandled by their arresters. There are some adolescents in the line-up, mostly from the poorest neighbourhoods. Some are "zoot-suiters", and though they might have had some *braggadacio* on the street, they do not show it here: their neurotic, worried faces now show anxiety. Many of them are products of their environment, criminals made by the deficiencies of a society which will now pass judgment on them. And though the effect of their backgrounds has permanently altered them into creatures who neither want nor often deserve sentiment, it is difficult to think of cause and effect without wondering whether, in the last analysis, this is not an inversion of justice, and that, perhaps one day, in a Kafkian situation, the prisoners will point the fingers and turn the klieg lights on to their inquisitors.

Each man must be seen with hat on, hat off, and it is revealing to discover just how much the hat itself is endowed with character in the methods of wearing it. It is tugged down on to one eye—tough guy; flipped to the back of the head—nonchalant; placed carefully on the top of the head, straight—pathetic, rather ridiculous.

Even the most formidable of these men, with their battered yellow faces, behaves in a babyish way, the pathetic manifestation of their fright and neurosis. They tug their overcoats, twist their fingers, shrug shoulders, hang heads listlessly, or demurely drop their eyelids. Others, with longer "stage" experience, peer through the lights with straining eyes, taking this opportunity to spot detectives to be avoided in future. An official, whose duty it is to pull them to attention, ejaculates: "Take yer hands outa yer pockets. Put'n yer hat. Put yer face to ther mike."

A quartet takes the stage: a pale young man, like a Velasquez portrait of King Philip of Spain; a hairy fellow, flashily dressed, with

narrow waist and padded shoulders; a respectable grey owl of a business-man; and an oyster-eyed old woman in an astrakhan coat. A collection of contrasts.

From a high desk the interrogator, prompted by a detective, challenges King Philip: "Ever been here before?"

"No, Captain."

"Well, how do you know I'm the Captain?"

King Philip is silent.

"Ever seen these people before?"

"Nope." But evidence is produced to show that this same quartet has had three previous convictions, and has served five years in Sing Sing.

"Pass along. Next there. And you, where were you when you got pinched? Hustlin', were you? Anything from Gin to Jesus, and maybe an Old Auntie in a pinch, eh? Any luck? Just that old gag about earning a living." The detectives betray their inhumanity, make jokes, and laugh at the unfortunates.

A frightened youth in a red and blue sweater stands beside his friend, a wizened dwarf, denying everything. A blonde, the Botticelli type, flicks imaginary dust from her dress as she is accused of defrauding Saks. She smiles superciliously and rolls her tongue, while it becomes evident that she has already seventeen counts against her for pick-pocketing, forgery and falsely obtained money: she is a psychiatric case. You turn away, embarrassed by your mingled feelings of pity and terror: this court, fulfilling Aristotle's rules for tragedy, makes its deep impression.

In the new "Tombs" buildings, the men are kept like animals for market. The women are taken to the Detention Home, and locked into a coop until their trial.

The photographers' lights burn all day for the endless "complimentary sittings". Head and shoulders, full face and in profile, with and without hat, that is the undeviating routine. Only the most serious cases warrant a full-length portrait. The proofs, filed in the Rogues' Gallery, are classified according to crime. These relentless camera studies reveal female traffickers in drugs with untidy hair, men masquerading as clergymen snapped in and out of disguise, female impersonators favouring matinée hats and clothes that were fashionable in 1918.

The inspector produces his favourite index card, and speaks in a harsh voice. "This is a nigger dressed as a woman, a pervert of the lowest type." He then produces his favourite objects. "This just shows you," he explains, "they think up the darndest things—this tin, hidden inside an Italian cheese, was full of dope. Under the soles of these carpet slippers we found more dope. This book is one of a set we found in a library—the inside was scooped out and filled with 'snow'. A woman sent someone these two tubes of toothpaste—but this one isn't toothpaste."

You leave the buildings, and go into the street. There is a cold wind, and the dawn is coming up with blue, stiff fingers. You turn your coat collar up, and walk away, heavy with the thought of the human misery you have witnessed.

III

The Jewish people seem more beneficent and unified in providing for both Jewish and non-Jewish aged, and their charity is something to be emulated by state and other groups. A typical example is the home endowed by Andrew Freedman, who was mindful of the fate of elderly couples, accustomed to refinement, who suffer poverty in old age. His hope was that here these elderly people, ill-equipped to fight poverty alone, could end their days in self-respect without the humiliating atmosphere of an institution; and it is only now and then that the dream is shattered. Sometimes the old people are difficult and unco-operative and the younger members of the staff become impatient. Even the Nonconformist parson, acting in the capacity of host, headmaster and hotel manager combined, occasionally suffers from frayed nerves.

Admitted to the home only in couples, usually well over sixty on arrival and relieved of anxiety, these aged people take on a new lease of life and bloom again in a sort of Indian summer.

In the living-rooms, furnished like an hotel with Persian carpets and palm trees in brass pots, they play bezique, and in their bedrooms, complete with triple mirrors, they dress for dinner. In the kitchen, notes are made of their personal tastes. "Stokes: breakfast ten minutes to eight, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays"; "Natica: cereal Friday night"; "Lew: milk toast in place of cheese dish." But even so, mistakes are made, and Mrs. Cram knows that, although

she asked that the butter should be put on the bread before it was toasted, it has arrived as it has to-day—just out of spite.

Monday always seems to be a black one, and again Mr. Snow and Colonel Roberts have got into one of their arguments as to whether Princeton or Yale is superior in the social scale, have broken up the bridge four and are no longer on speaking terms; and it was disgraceful that the old German doctor should not be allowed to cook the *Hasen Pfeffer* in his room, after he had spent five dollars on it. The brusque housemaid remains hard-hearted, saying, "He knew the rules, didn't he?"

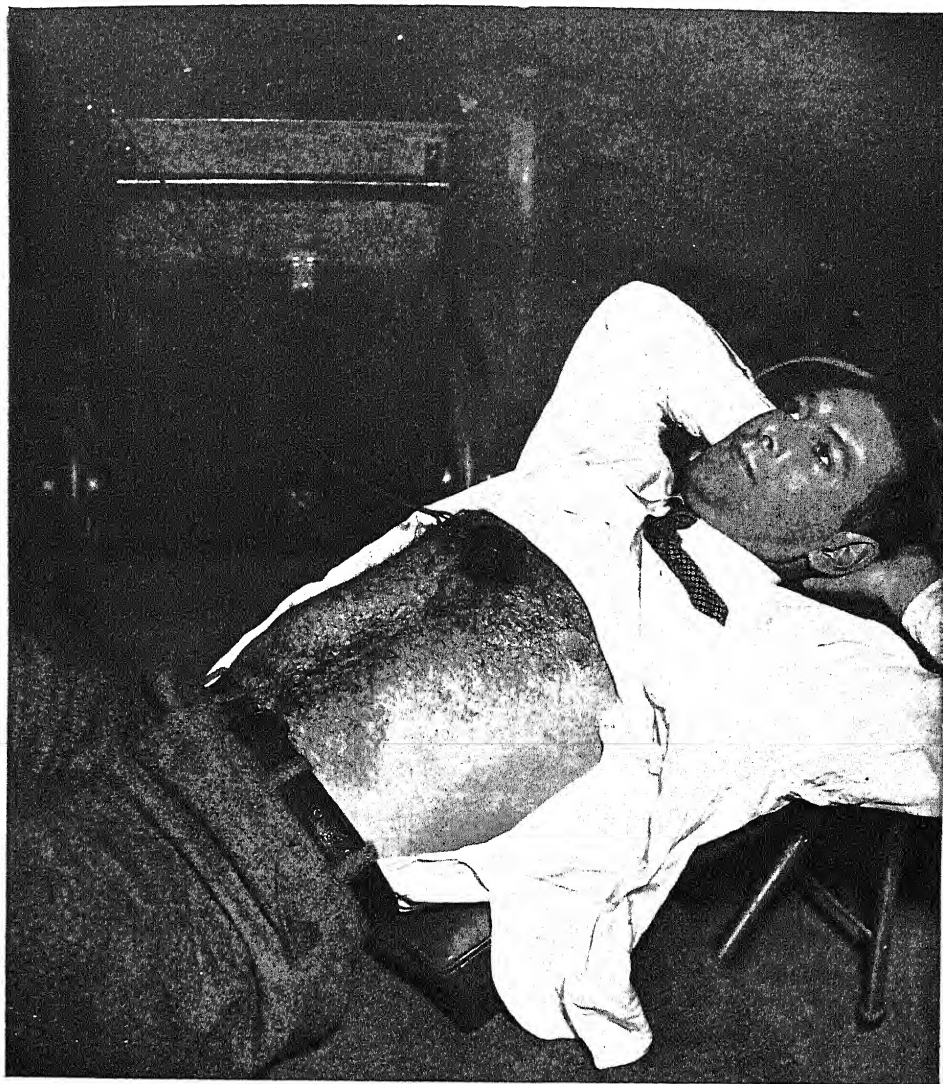
The Nonconformist parson introduces Mrs. Tomplinson, who is happy again with a few pieces of her own furniture in a room that looks out over the garden, where irises will bloom in the summer. But not long ago she had "carried on": it had been very tricky work getting the empty bed out of the room after her husband died. They had offered her a canary, but she said the inmates were not allowed pets and she knew it was only a ruse. So they had to explain that rules existed only to be broken, and she accepted the canary.

Upstairs, Mrs. Wendman is lying in the infirmary, next to the little room that the Nonconformist parson calls "our morgue", but Mrs. Wendman explains that it won't be long before she is downstairs again. "There is nothing wrong, just run down; but you must expect that at seventy-eight."

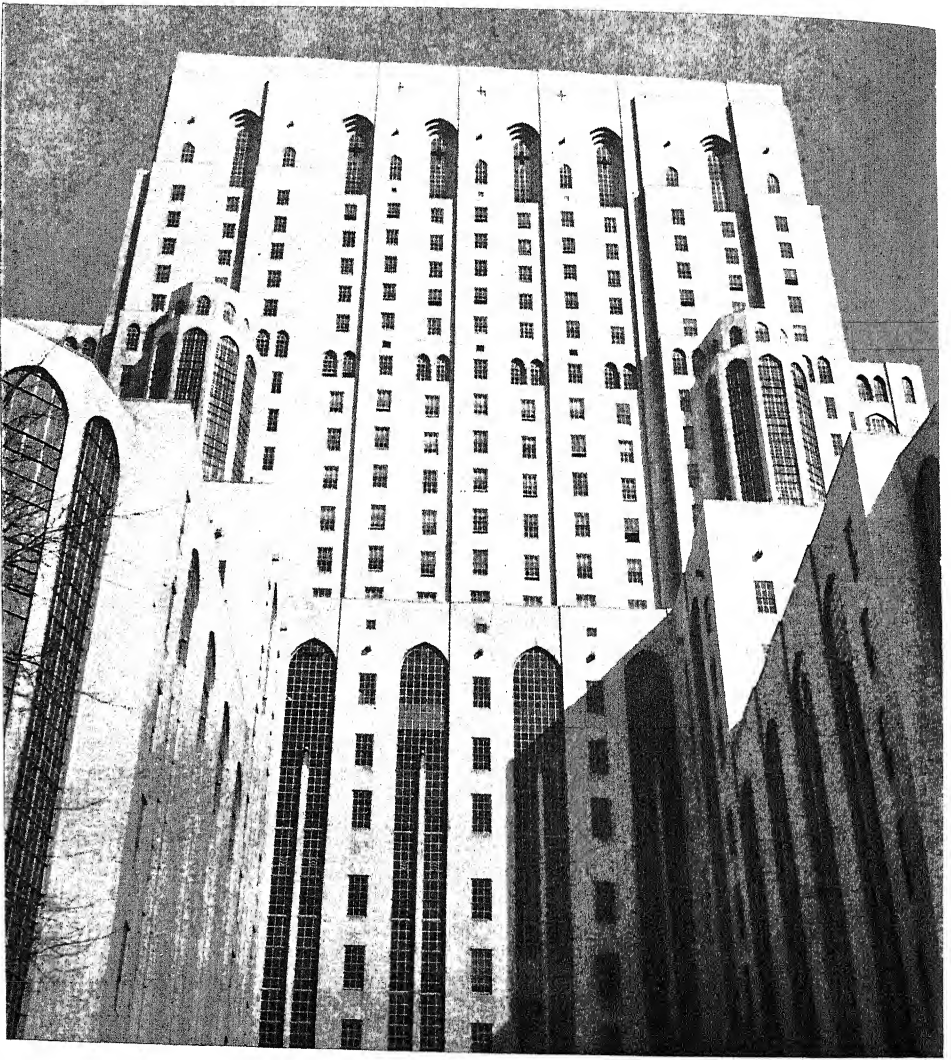
IV

Inspired by the Palace of the Popes at Avignon, the New York Hospital, Cornell Medical Centre, is probably the finest example of modern architecture in the world. Covering three square blocks, made of white brick, from near or far it is awesome and beautiful in its simplicity, as it towers in dazzling splendour over the East River. Windows alone decorate the exterior: they give it the grandeur of a cathedral. Go through every corridor, every ward, and that impression remains. One leaves as one entered, with no feeling of depression, no dread of disease, no horrible and grisly images in the mind to provide future torment. It is like some giant modern monastery where hundreds of people devote their lives tirelessly to tending the sick, in an unbroken atmosphere of strength and purity.

The story of the New York Hospital begins in the late eighteenth



*On the air : his heart-beats are recorded for an
Edgar Allan Poe story*



NEW YORK HOSPITAL

century, when its first patients were soldiers of the revolutionary war. It is to-day, and always has been, supported by private contributions. These buildings were finished in 1932, and house not only the Hospital but the Cornell University Medical College, with which the hospital had long had a working connection; but it is this physical affiliation of hospital and medical college which makes this New York Hospital—Cornell Medical Centre one of the world's centres of medical care, teaching and research.

In the marble entrance hall the effect is one of sunshine and light. So it is throughout—in the doctors' and nurses' dining-rooms, in the luxury suites for the wealthy, fitted with cork ceilings and aluminium-framed soundproof windows, in the simple, cheerful rooms for poor patients.

Patients here pay only as much as they can afford, and in an average year 88 per cent of all cases—more than sixty-six thousand in one recent year—pay less than the cost of their care.

Pass through the hospital from end to end and you will not see an ugly or a tasteless object. For once, vast sums of money have bought beauty.

A doctor, a modern, scientific Perseus, recent addition to the resident medical staff of one hundred and forty-seven, looks down at the compass in the floor to take his bearing in this six and a half mile labyrinth of corridors. A nurse telephones on one of the hospital's eleven hundred lines. You pass glass cases containing surgical instruments, gleaming and immaculate, as if these modern knights in white had found something as worthy of reverence as the Holy Grail.

This attendant with trucks of sterilized water performs as if his rites were religious. He tends his diamond-bright fluorescent flasks and manufactures gigantic jewels as the sun, streaming through the windows, prodigally flashes diamonds from his retorts that quiver in reflection on the walls. The attendant becomes a magician, a modern Merlin. He tests rubber gloves, blasting air into them to seek defects. Integrity means so much to him that he did not rest content until he had himself invented a machine for making imperfections in the gloves immediately detectable. That seems to be typical of all who work here, from the surgeons in the thirty-four operating theatres to the laundry's eighty workers.

In the basement is a new world of perfect cleanliness. In the kitchens are pastrycooks who turn out gargantuan cherry tarts and apple flans comparable to fine French or Swiss pastries. Here are mountains of rose radishes, topped and tailed, in a spotless room where salads are prepared to regain any appetite. A man chops carrots with the speed and efficiency of a machine. Stacks of celery are being scraped. Sack after sack of potatoes disappears into the mouth of the grind, emerging at last to be inspected and to have the eyes cut out by hand. Primrose-coloured cabbages are fed into a shredding machine to become cole slaw. A machine peels and cores apples by the thousand. And so the work goes on, ceaselessly, efficiently, in preparation for the eight thousand meals the hospital must serve every day. From operating theatre to kitchen the atmosphere is the same: men and women are living for an ideal of service, with the finest equipment that money and science can provide to help them.

Conditions are different at Bellevue, the City Hospital. Day after day, some of the finest physicians and surgeons in America treat huge numbers of patients there, doing magnificent work; yet the atmosphere is not the same. With its sad understaffing (many of the doctors do not earn a salary commensurate with their duties), its ill-equipped food and medical functions, and the overcrowded conditions prevailing, the place has a depressing aura, as the visitor realizes that this is the way poor people are taken care of.

This group of buildings, the largest general acute hospital in the world, with dark courts, black ironwork and subterranean tunnels, stands on the East River at 26th Street. The blackened paint, once green, and the orange daubs of undercoating, combine to resemble the frightening early pictures of Chirico. The halls have a depressing smell of sickness in them; not the usual antiseptic odour of a hospital, unpleasant enough as it is, but something more sinister, something perhaps which connects with death. There certainly is no attempt whatever to camouflage the grimness of death, accident and disease. It is to the Bellevue that street smash victims, or helpless drunkards found in its district, are taken. The ambulance sirens, as the cars rush up the ramp to the emergency wards, sound constantly.

A very bright probationer nurse is deputed to guide us through

the hospital. Her bell-shaped muslin cap is poised precariously on the back of her head of streaming blonde hair.

"Let's go in here to the Superintendent." We follow, and she asks, "What have you got to-day?"

"Only a cardiac," he replies, and we see the old man with grey hair who lies entwined in rubber tubes which lead to bubbling retorts and oxygen valves. We pass on.

The "anaemias" and "surgical conditions", in varying states of consciousness, lie in rows.

Some minute babies sprawl, face down, in their cots. They turn, and their perfection is shattered, for each one is afflicted with a dreadful hare-lip.

"They're waiting for operations. They'll be all right," we are reassured by our blonde guide.

One little black child, curled like a cat at the foot of its cot, wears a white turban of bandage, shielding an infection of the scalp.

In winter, especially, the hospital operates beyond its capacity. Then the three thousand, three hundred and twenty-five beds overflow into the corridors. Wards are filled with patients of every colour; they idle or sit about anywhere, in colourless grey robes that become dingier the more often they are washed. Those who have undergone brain operations have lost all personality with the shaving of their heads. Not ill enough to occupy beds all day, not well enough to leave, they roam about, waiting only for the passage of time.

"This is the kids' nursery, but it's rest-hour now."

The dolls are abandoned. In the curtained darkness, in a wide-eyed trance, the children lie in their glass cubicles.

"Let's go to the psychiatric wards." Our guide confesses that she enjoys showing people around the hospital. "It's nice to get away from hard work now and then." She is an enthusiastic ninny. Her hair flies in the crisp breeze, her cape waves as she dances along past the Bellevue Day Camp boat, for the transport of arrested tuberculosis cases, moored at the water's edge.

"See those broken windows? That's where the rowdy boys live. We'll go see them, but I doubt if we'll be allowed to see the 'violents'. Pity—they're cute. We have *more* Napoleons and Duchesses of Windsor in this place . . ." The psychiatric building fascinates

our guide. To ignore her inane observations on madness, we turn away momentarily.

Added to Bellevue in the last ten years, the block is almost comparable with the New York Hospital, so shining are its floors, so polished its cleanliness. This is the building containing all the unfortunates of unsound mind—those who have been unable to bring themselves to go out of doors for years, those who have washed their hands so often that the skin has come off, men and women whose minds have suffered so that they can no longer order their own lives, creating one vast *milles feuilles* of abnormality.

To-day the alcoholics and melancholics are too listless to show interest in anybody as they stand motionless, in colourless, beltless robes.

"No belts? My goodness, no! If they want to die, they can think of more things . . ." and our frivolous guide relates some strange methods of suicide.

An old man will not sit down to lunch because he believes that Moses is calling to him. Another thumps out "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" at the piano. A radio is playing the "One O'clock Jump" at the end of the corridor.

"Look through that window—that's where we keep the camisoles."

"Do you mean straight jackets?"

"If you like to call them that."

Through locked doors comes a banging and shouting. "Those rowdy boys have broken the bell." Eventually the door is opened and the boys prove to be little rowdier than those in a school playground. A negro boy tap-dances ceaselessly. A small boy whispers, winking, "Get me outa here, can't yer?"

Most of these delinquent boys are victims of bad home environment. Here they have their puppet theatre, and a stenographer takes down their remarks during the performance to provide a basis for the analysis of their complexes and reactions. "Heck, how the audience yells. No foolin', you oughta hear what they say if they don't like the show. Here's the classroom—good heavens, where *are* the schizophrenic panels? They were swell. Miss Mantis again, I guess. Just like her to take them down."

However, in spite of Miss Mantis we admire drawings and paintings by schizophrenic children, made for purpose of diagnosis. They

remind one of the work of Miro, and are infinitely beautiful in the boldness and simplicity of their design. Strange colour combinations, poetic fantasy and integrity are a legacy from the primitives. It is astonishing to find that compositions which would make demands on the energy and vitality of a trained and mature master are blithely tackled by mentally unsound children.

Outside again, the student nurse points to the mortuary. "When someone is dying here, we say they're flying. My, I'll never forget my first corpse! I thought he looked like something was happening, so I called one of the nurses and said I thought he was flying, but she just said, 'Take another look—he's flown'." She turns on her heel and points: "Over there's the Fidelio brewery. On a hot day you can smell the hops and it's very pleasant. Well, good-bye, and not at all—you're welcome, I'm sure."

Plans are being made for a new Bellevue Hospital, to occupy the blocks from 30th to 34th Streets, and First Avenue to the East River, but as yet they are in an embryonic state, and behind the grim walls of the present Bellevue, the life and death of the poor goes on. Apart from the clinics and small private hospitals, there are more than a hundred hospitals in the New York area, but they are overcrowded, sadly understaffed, and their doctors are underpaid and without proper equipment.

v

In overheated apartments on Central Park West, the lonely old ladies assemble for the evening of morbid entertainment. The séance is about to start, so the compère switches out the orange-shaded lights. Behind a plush curtain a medium, tied in an arm-chair, is hypnotized into sleep. Soon the compère evokes from him a few unintelligible parrot noises that, with encouragement, gain in volume and coherence until the low-ceilinged apartment is rent by his blood-curdling shrieks. The compère directs the cross-questioning, and from behind the curtains idiotic noises profess to bring back secrets from beyond the grave. The old ladies ask avidly for news of their dead husbands or sons. They are answered in whimsical and inadequate colloquialisms. A white cloth, tied to an end of a stick, is waved through the curtains, and is said to be the ghost of Sir Oliver Lodge. Some ectoplasm, manufactured from a mixture containing

white of egg, gelatine and soap, is thrown about in the darkness. Flowers from the next world, the cheapest that are currently available in the New York market, are strewn around the room. By now the old ladies are quaking with emotion, and their feelings run so high that to show one's own incredulity would be considered a personal affront. The atmosphere in this crowded apartment becomes foetid, and it is a gruesome experience to be roasted alive with these gullible old ladies and their horrible quacks. Yet it is impossible to leave, for the medium is performing his act by the front door of the apartment, and no one is allowed to pass through the curtains before the compère has run through his pantomime of awakening his accomplice from his trance, tidying up his effects, and going through the real business of the evening—the collection of a dollar from each of his dupes.

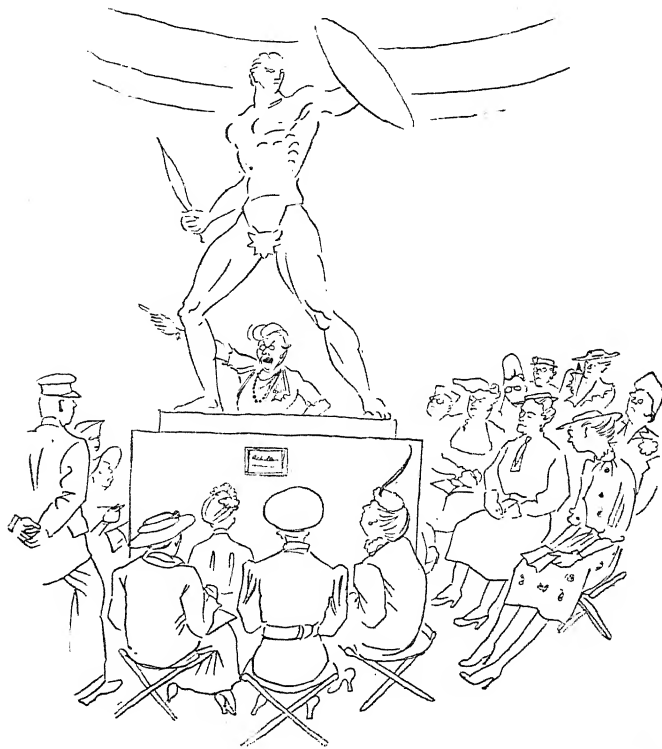
VI

Anyone who enjoys Helen Hokinson's "drawings of elderly ladies" in the *New Yorker* will have realized how New York club-women delight in lectures. But it is difficult to comprehend just how widespread and general is this yearning for culture. In museums one may see wide-eyed groups of all types sitting in a steam-heated daze, surrounded by Egyptian mummies. The lecturer meanders on about the wonders of the East. Her manner is detached, as if she spoke her thoughts aloud, but thoughts too lazy to produce ideas. Nevertheless, her audience is fascinated.

From Egypt we move to the medieval loggia. There is a rush of camp stools. The lecturer, under the spell of her own voice, preens herself, posing as she impersonates a wooden madonna. She dispenses incongruous information about thirteenth-century carved figures, confidently and without fear of protest. "Look at those sandals. Well, our conclusion is that this is Saint James the Less. The colours, however, are wrong. The under-garment should be red and the outer garment blue, but then, all colour makes an emotional appeal. Now let us look at his hair. What wonderful organization of the beard! It is vurry, *vurry* decorative, but now we have just a second left for the windows."

Again a rush of camp stools. This time to the corner in which a jewelled strip has been transplanted from Chartres. The lecturer

scratches the back of her head and continues: "Again we see the emotional appeal of colour. Here every single piece of colour is a single piece of glass, and every single piece of glass is a single piece of colour. Now the effect of all this colour creates a vurry emotional appeal. Now, when you walk into a building and you see a window



like this, it doesn't look like a window at all. Why, it's a vista! But naturally it is a more glorious vista than nature ever made, for not only do you get a feeling of protection from the wind and the rain, but you get that glorious protected feeling that nature does not give. Just look how they used up every colour." There is hardly a pause for breath. "Even if it is a cow, it is mauve, and the trees are *red*, and it doesn't matter what colour the glass was, just so long as it's the right shape they put it in."

Upstairs, among the pictures, the lecturer is in hot pursuit of a gallery. Whereas the butterfly alights on the biggest, the most perfect

bloom, this lecturer flits to concentrate on some of the least impressive works of art.

She is as if mesmerized before an enormous Caracci. "Now, the extraordinary merit of this picture lies in the way the artist has represented the meeting of the man and the woman. Look at the soft femininity of the woman's body, note the little dimpled hand that might have been the work of a French master, of a Boucher, and note the strong, virile quality embodied in the man's figure."

Her audience grants her rapt attention.

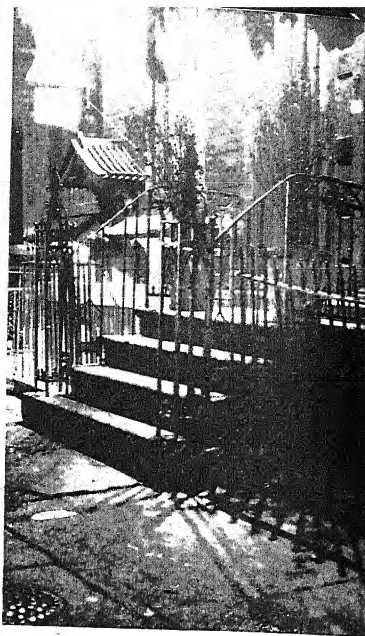
VII

So full of the world's works of art has New York become that it is as rewarding for an artist to see the museums here as it is for him to visit the Prado or the Uffizi. The Metropolitan is a civic institution; it is impossible to give any estimation of the richness contained in the long galleries and corridors that are adorned with art works of all nations, displayed with a cleanliness and freshness that makes the Louvre look, by comparison, like a derelict storehouse. Apart from the finest examples of the greatest masters of painting, one finds medieval glass from Italy, manuscripts hundreds of years old, fabulous Oriental rugs and Islamic and Persian ceramics. There is a library of some seventy-six thousand volumes and a hundred thousand photographs pertinent to art pursuits. One wing is given up to interior decorations prevalent in America from the early seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Other wings offer impressive collections of Egyptian art, stone and alabaster reliefs from Assyria, and relics culled from excavations in Mesopotamia, Greece and Italy.

The museum was born less than a hundred years ago, and its splendour grows with every year, for American millionaires have a habit of bequeathing their collections to the state. Ironically, these pictures, bought with insular taste, become the pictures for the masses. Comparatively recent additions to the museum include the Pierpont Morgan collection; the Maitland-Griggs collection of Italian Primitives; the George Blumenthal collection of decorative arts of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; the Mansfield collection of Japanese Prints; a small collection of German and Austrian porcelains has been acquired, and there was a Rockefeller gift of the Gobelin Tapestries, illustrating the months of the year. The fabulous



PATCHIN PLACE IN GREENWICH VILLAGE



Bache collection of paintings and furniture, which is on display, will soon become the property of the museum.

An offshoot of the Metropolitan Museum, situated at Fort Tryon Park, is the museum endowed by John D. Rockefeller. The present building is constructed like a medieval cloisters, and contains a remarkable collection of medieval works of art and examples of architecture. In the afternoons, one can stroll, like any Brother Juniper contemplating God, through the enclosed garden, listening to the *kyrie-eleison*, amplified through loud-speakers.

The glass and aluminium structure of the Museum of Modern Art, built at a cost of over two million dollars, possesses, in Cyril Connolly's phrase, a "felicitous contemporary assertion". Its exhibitions consist of ultra-modern American and foreign works of art; paintings by Picasso, Tchelitchev, the Impressionists, the modern Primitives and the Surrealists, Mondrian, Florine Stettheimer and Stuart Davis. There are also architectural designs, sculptures, mobiles by Alexander Calder, pottery, and photography. In the basement, the modern and comfortable auditorium is the viewing-place for the museum's film library, presented throughout the year and covering the great moving pictures of all countries, from the beginnings of cinema to the present day. Theatre designs are often on display.

The New York Historical Museum on Central Park, between 76th and 77th Streets, is proud of its collection of American colonial toys, its old carriages and fire-engines, and is also fascinating for its more intimate and heterogeneous collection of exhibits that a particularly acquisitive squirrel might have brought from all quarters of the city during the last three hundred years. There are early American manuscripts and papers, uniforms, costumes, silver, a charming collection of miniatures of society beauties of the 'nineties, over four hundred water-colours of the birds of America by the romantic John James Audubon, the earliest views of the city, George Washington's letters and New York's first newspaper, *Bradford's Gazette*.

The Aquarium, where Jenny Lind once sang under the auspices of Mr. Barnum, has been forced out of its Battery Park home to the Bronx Zoo in order to make way for an entrance to the new tunnel to Brooklyn. The Historical Society has plans for a reconstruction, on the spot, of the fort that once guarded the harbour where, between 1855 and 1890, eight million immigrants landed. The Aquarium's

original exhibits have dwindled, although the electric eel still swims in peaceful captivity, and the big turtle seems contented in its new home. There are no more large fish, no sharks or sting-rays, but a dazzling variety of tropical fish, including Japanese fan-tails, tetras, fighter fish and angel fish, awaiting transplantation to a more permanent home.

In New York's Natural History Museum one can absorb natural history without tears. It is easy for the layman to understand what goes on inside a drop of water or to study the life-history of a tree. No dull little black-framed tag explains "This sequoia is two thousand years old", for the tree is its own autobiography, and the officials have merely translated it into terms we understand. The life-rings of the giant trunk are ticketed. Life for this sequoia began in A.D. 550, so the rings are numerous. The ring that was born in Charlemagne's time is thus indicated; other rings bear a legend telling of the events that were their contemporaries in the long march through the centuries. In 1492, the discovery of America; when this ring grew, Milton was living; this ring was contemporary with the Battle of Waterloo; this with the era of Goethe, Dickens, Thackeray, and so on and on, until the last ring that marks the death of the forest patriarch, when in 1891 the tree was felled. Even then, it had perhaps run no more than half its natural span, for redwoods can live as long as three thousand years.

These exhibits are no dull, glass-cased collection. They quicken the interest and fire the imagination. Polyps are so enlarged that they resemble superb jewels; there are sponges of unbelievably delicate and complicated design, and exhibits of stuffed elephants and gorillas are dramatically arranged in their native jungle, with wonderful lighting effects by Wendel.

One hall is devoted to two thousand five hundred specimens of North American mammals, another is given over wholly to reconstructed dinosaur skeletons; in another, human skeletons furnish a lesson in anthropology.

VIII

We sit in wide circles in a dimly lit room with domed ceiling. The audience expectantly awaits the lecture on "The End of the World". A hidden recording plays the Liebestod. The room is darkened so

that our eyes cannot penetrate the pitch blackness. Suddenly the stars of the vast infinity of the firmament appear. There is a catching of the breath from the audience, like the stirring in sleep, or the sighing of an enormous prehistoric beast.

The lecturer speaks in a quiet, sympathetic voice, using a few similes, something like poetry. He calls the moon "that big neighbour", and his talk is absorbing in the way that only simple things can be. His aim is to dramatize and popularize astronomy, and he is aided by a variety of effects (the artificial firmament is one of them) which he operates by various knobs which control them. In this vast room the illusion is complete. We imagine ourselves lying in a field in summer, looking up at the stars, with the added attraction that our vague speculations are met by magic arrows pointing out everything that we want to know. We wait to see a comet collide with the earth. All of a sudden we are surrounded by fire, blood, brimstone and desolation—we have witnessed the end of the world,

IX

The Museum of the City of New York entirely covers the growth of New York City, and is an excellent eye scanning the continuous transformations of Manhattan. Begun in 1932 on the anniversary of Alexander Hamilton's birth, it treats of every phase of the city's development, and charts and maps illustrate the various stages of expansion. Painstaking models depict the life and environment of New York down through the years.

Founded by New York University, the Museum of Living Art has an ambiguous name, since its contents are a motley collection of paintings and drawings, outstanding being the work of Matisse, Duchamp, Miro and Cézanne. Apart from the magnificent bounty of the manuscripts in the Morgan Library on East 36th Street, I was particularly impressed by the exquisite beauty of the collection of hand-painted Tarot cards, made for a member of the Sforza family in the eleventh century.

The Frick collection, which has for some time been open to the public, essays to preserve the luxurious "home atmosphere". Yellow roses adorn the dining-table on which a family servant still keeps watch. But the fabulous extravagance of the rooms painted by Boucher and Fragonard fill to-day's visitors with awe, and even some

of the superb pictures themselves seem overwhelmed by the opulent swags and decorations of the Italian Renaissance furnishing. With the organ, festooned with gilt cherubims, playing for the benefit of straggling visitors, the staircase and the most expensive chairs roped off, the atmosphere is that of a wedding reception at which both parties consider the match with disfavour.

A small boy stands in front of the Manet sketch of a bull-fight: "Did they always kill the bull?" he asks. "Oh, no," comes the reply; "the bull sometimes killed them."

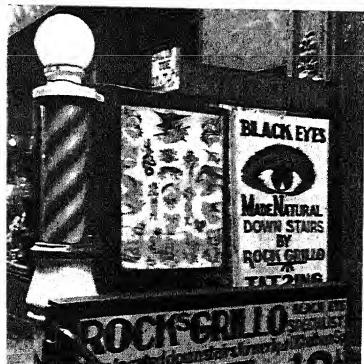
X

Deep in New York's downtown financial district, with its odd collection of ill-mated architectural styles—Corinthian columns cheek by jowl with neo-Baroque doorways, Gothic towers loftily disdaining mid-Victorian embellishments—lies an innocuous building of twin green domes, which houses the Stock Exchange. This mere shoot among the vast masonry stalks of the Woolworth building and other great skyscrapers that have since sprung up above it, is ironically reminiscent of Monte Carlo's Casino, where fortunes are won and lost for pleasure.

To-day one is warned to expect little excitement, for it is a "quiet" day. The deafening roar from the hall that greets the stranger is therefore somewhat surprising. Whistling, shouting, clapping and laughter echo and re-echo through the hall. The clamour reverberates as do sounds in an indoor swimming bath, but this carnival is for men only.

Looking down at them from a balcony, the brokers and employees are bewilderingly like ants. Their every movement is accelerated as in old-time movies when even a funeral was a breathless business. The human ants swarm wildly, weaving in and out (there is a rule against running on the floor of the Exchange), chewing gum, snatching at newspapers, hurling them down, scribbling fanatically on pocket-pads and never attempting to do less than three things at a time. Paper lies thick on the floor, and we see a sudden cloud of it rise into the air, to settle down again gently like snow.

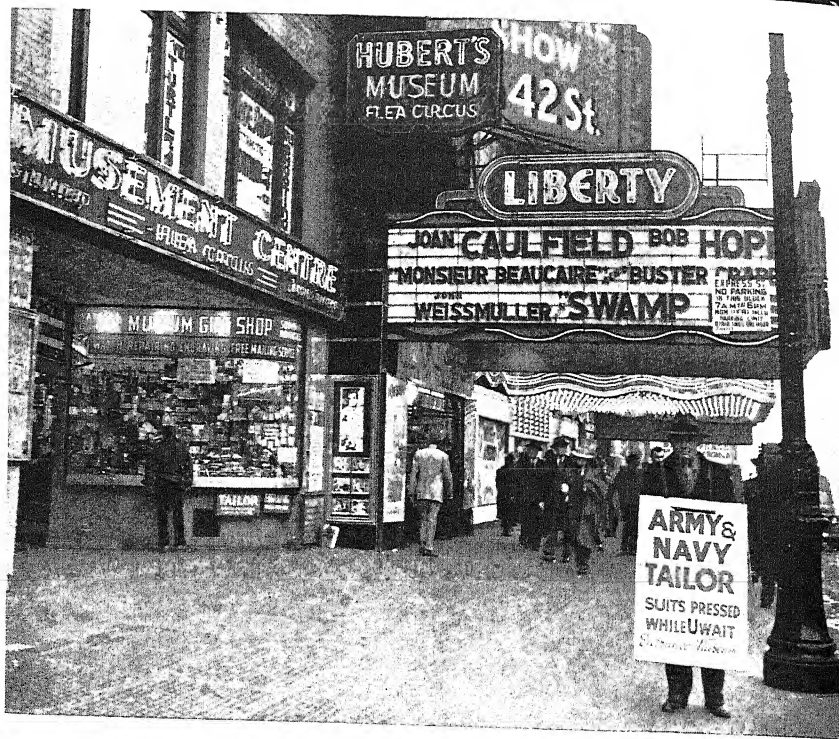
Each man, with the experience of years, has gained the meticulous certainty of a machine as he flips out his note-book, jots down a quotation, and folds it back into his breast-pocket in one nonchalant



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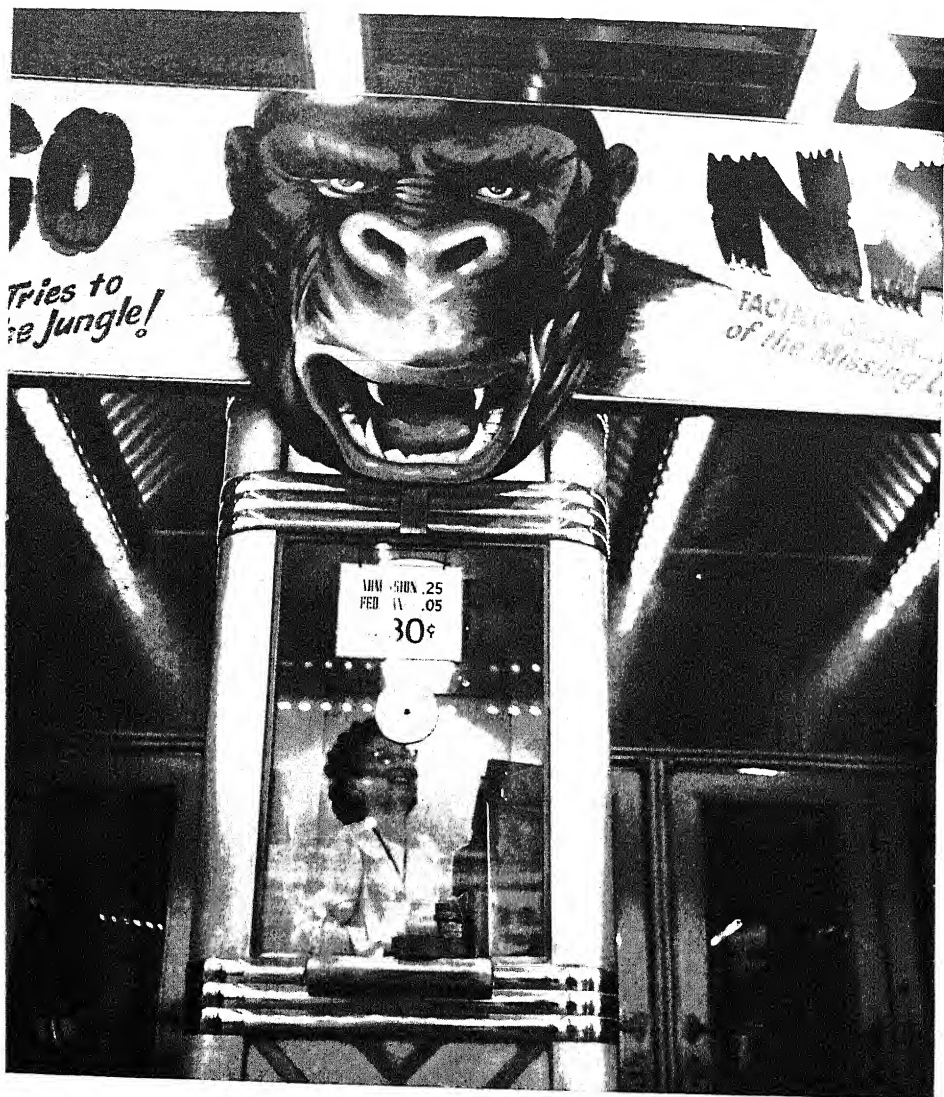


SIDEWALK
SIGHTS



AMUSEMENT
PARK





ATTRACTION ON 42ND STREET

gesture. Everyone takes bundles of papers from their pockets, selecting the sheet they seek with incredible speed, as if every fingertip possessed an infallible eye. They are like conjurers who have mastered their art, so completely acquiring another sense that hesitation, for them, seems rather absurd.

Placed at intervals, the horseshoe "trading posts" are irresistible magnets for the ants, respectable-looking ants, with grey hair and spectacles, who feverishly chew gum. An enlargement of the cellophane ticker-tape glares from each of the hall's four corners, thrown from a trans-lux projector. The figures swim by: X60, SBC1, 00-2, SMS7-8, RCA597, and the eye falters trying to follow, the mind having long ceased its effort to find meaning in the crazy succession. In reality that tape means happiness and despair, new homes, cars, furs, jewels, everything that money can buy. It means tragedy, too, and the disaster that sudden financial ruin wreaks in wealthy homes. To the ants it means all these things and more, but they act mechanically as without immediate consciousness of the fact. These are poker-faced ants. It seems impossible to link the tape with reality.

Yet the telephonists hear everything. Gigantic deals are made just verbally between members. Here again, by practice, a sixth sense is at work. Ears are trained to listen to three or four conversations simultaneously, and the presence of others nearby is no distraction. The brokers, too, have abnormally acute ears.

"It's very quiet to-day. . . . Was that a seven-eighths bid?" The transaction is done in a flash. From the moment the quotation appears, not more than a minute passes before notice of the sales appears throughout the country. The ticker-tape co-ordinates these transactions and pins them down to permanency.

Grey-uniformed messengers run their limited beats. Others carry telephones, plug in, converse at an alarming speed, plug out and are on their way again. Gold entrails of pneumatic tubes carry orders and reports from the "Trading Posts", an intricate tube system of communication.

Nervous energy is not always well suppressed on the Floor. By the end of a quiet day nerves are sometimes tense, and an outlet must be found. Practical jokes suffice. The men who guide the destinies of New World dynasties, of the nation itself perhaps, have been known to behave like schoolboys. They yell, take pot-shots at

hanging hats, hug one another, slap each other diabolically hard on the back, jab one another in the ribs, or massage carefully the nape of a neck. It is all very strenuous, tiring to watch, yet these financial robots show no signs of fatigue. A young man, mechanically shrugging his shoulders, fidgets with his hands, and for nothing better to do unhooks a telephone, barks into it, and hangs it up again. This seems to be particularly funny and relieving to pent-up spirits. No news breaks the calm of the quiet day, so in the babel below a buffoon tickles an old man's ear.

An employee of the Exchange mounts a marble balcony, enters the rostrum and sets the mechanism which sounds the three o'clock gong. The horseplay is suddenly halted. The men reach for their bowler hats, their eyes turn to stone, their mouths become grim as they leave for respectable homes in Long Island, Westchester, Park Avenue and Riverside Drive. With the striking of the gong, as on Cinderella's midnight, life changes utterly. The feckless boys have become transformed into heads of families, dignified, intimidating pillars of New York society.

After this crazy symphony of unintelligible sound, it might be refreshing to see a brokerage firm. So to the strange underworld of the broker's offices. Neat little ants here, with immaculate creases in sober suits, eyes impersonal but bright as buttons, sit behind desks, conversing with clients. In the back offices, the bookwork goes on. The men work steadily, yet they remain unruffled, neat, methodical, efficient. Into their books go strings of figures, chronicling in mathematics the rise and fall of family fortunes.

These rooms are bare, severe; so lacking adornment of any kind that the telephones, in regular rows, appear decorative rather than functional. "We're geared up to high speed and big business, eh?" winks an ant with a cigar in his mouth.

Each of these rooms has eight or more of these human adding machines, tabulating the gains and losses of others' financial bets. Do they ever break down? If so, what fate befalls them? Unimaginable that they could even falter, and one day, perhaps, be no longer in running order.

VI

UNCONDUCTED TOURS

I

DENTON, in his *Brief Description of New York*, published in London in 1670, says he will "begin with the Manhatans Island, so called by the Indians, it lieth within land betwixt the degrees of 41 and 42 of North-Latitude, and is about 14 miles long, and two broad". The island, which Minuit bought in 1626 from the Algonquins for twenty-four dollars, was a mere mashie shot in width. To-day it has the proportions of a universe.

Looking down upon Manhattan, the Indian's "Island of the Hills", where only three hundred years ago no white man had set foot, the stranger is surprised to find how much red or brown brick is comprised in its buildings. The skyscraper palaces may be apricot-coloured and silver, but many of them are also of russet red, and they are surrounded by vast tracts of squalid three-storied brick dwellings and endless square blocks of Elmer Rice's "brownstone" houses. New York possesses every sort of known and unknown architectural style. The "brownstones", with flights of steps leading up to the front doors and external fire-escapes, are neighbours of imitation French châteaux, of spruce Georgian houses, and the churches are Byzantine, Gothic, classical and modernistic. Louis Sullivan is acclaimed as being the first to give architectural form to the skyscraper, but even now the skyscraper is sometimes built in the so-called French-Romanesque style.

The civic buildings are often the least impressive. Built for the most part by the friends of the political party in power at the time, they remain merely monuments to graft.

The rich and the poor live side by side. A row of abject rooming houses is often wedged between the most expensive hotels, while a few paces from Sutton Place, where rentals are the highest in New York, the urchins chalk the façades of their slum dwellings. Steinway grand pianos are made in the centre of Hell's Kitchen, and, next to the fashionable little houses on the East River, is the fresh-meat

slaughter-house. New York is made up of small towns, villages and settlements, so that a stranger is never as inconspicuous as he might expect, for in each neighbourhood he is recognized as such.

When we talk of Broadway, it is of the central, theatre, sky-sign section of a twenty-five-mile thoroughfare. Broadway by day loses significance. The sightless electric bulbs are lost in a web of wires, struts and girders. The eyes select, painfully but irresistibly, from the web—WALGREEN—RUPPERT BEER—CHOP SUEY—LUNCH 60 CENTS—HUBERT'S FLEA CIRCUS—CHESS AND CHECKERS 15 CENTS AN HOUR—FOUR ROSES—PEPSI-COLA . . .

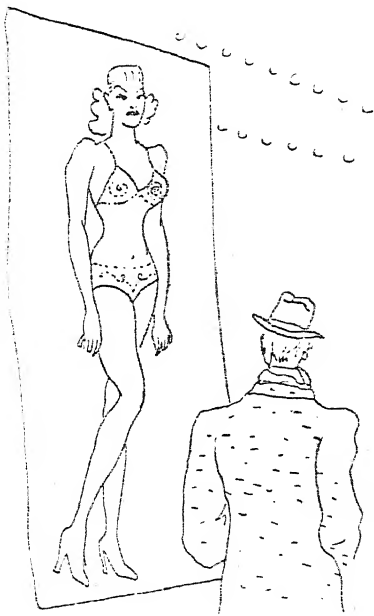
No more than a hundred years ago, Joseph Delacroix, "a distiller of cordials", provided a number of lamps to "light up the dark road to his Vauxhall Garden". Those were Broadway's first lights above Canal Street.

Broadway at night! The streets become reflectors of the lights radiating from the glittering rubies and diamonds of windows and doorways. Coloured lights soar high and a floodlit clock seems to hang in heaven. Gargantuan neon "spectaculars", costing as much as thirty thousand dollars to construct, flash, blink and alternate letters as they advertise some new movie. The passers-by stand and gape up at the sign operated by a large beer company, which is an outdoor movie in itself, with animated cartoons, sports and dancing flashed by hundreds of photo-electric bulbs. The man in the Camel advertisement blows giant smoke rings into the night air. A panorama of the Grand Canyon changes colour continually, another multi-bulb tribute to some beer concern. Soap bubbles fly up into the night from a huge box of soap flakes perched on top of a building. The heavens flash: RIALTO—PARAMOUNT THEATRE—FOUR ROSES—PEPSI-COLA. Nimble electric lights of all colours are twinkling, glaring, jerking, zigzagging, darting, fidgeting, tumbling, cascading and waltzing gaily above on their one-dimensional plateau, as if in mockery of the progress of the crushed, slow-moving crowd below. Father Duffy, in bronze, stands ignored. In the haze of red and blue neon lights, the automobiles resemble the Aurora Borealis, while their owners wait with hungry eyes for one more green light to appear. The faces of the pedestrians are drained of colour, like those of actors at rehearsal in the haze of coloured lights. Yet still

they retain that hard, not often happy, look. Some Broadway faces have breath-taking beauty and all possess that American poise which gives each face its individual character.

On the corner, an old Italian man is selling roast chestnuts. Outside Bickford's the deaf and dumb conversationalists stand, their hands moving quickly, like birds in flight, attracting the curiosity of other pedestrians. In the side-streets, music floats out of the jazz schools. The new Negro Modeling Agency is ending a busy day. A driver, having parked his car in a no-parking space, comes back to find the police have absconded with it on a special towing device: he will get his car back later with a heavy fine.

On 42nd Street, the marquees of a dozen movie-houses promise sensations, violence, thrills. Passers-by seek vicarious distraction. Amusement arcades attract with noise from their shooting galleries in the rear. A couple of sailors swagger to a stop, look at the signs outside, then glance in at the Mutoscope, showing "The Electric Chair" or "Life of a Model" for one cent. The rows of telephone



booths are filled with their occupants making their calls of love or business. Men stop and gaze at the windows offering loud shirts and hand-painted neckties, jockey shorts and Adam hats. Hands deep in their pockets, grim with grievance, a knot of fly-blown-looking men pace up and down with placards exhorting passers-by not to patronize the hotel that has had some disagreement with the musicians' local number 812. "Picketing" is common among the two powerful trade unions in the country. But only the most conscientious citizens will avoid these commercial organizations that are claimed to have treated labour unfairly.

The noises have been borrowed from Coney Island: phonograph

record shops and dance-halls relay a never-ending programme of "swing" music.

The legless beggar crawls by on his wheeled platform, with the oval dish-pan in front of him scattered with a few dimes and nickels. A crowd watches the Atomic Girl receive thousands of volts through her body. The strongest sailor in the U.S. Navy, with testimonials to prove his claims, tells his audience proudly that he is sixty-five years old, removes his false teeth, then bends a half-inch spike in his mouth.

For twelve cents the crowds see Professor Hubert's Flea Circus. One flea pushes a merry-go-round thousands of times its own weight; Prince Henry is a football player, grabs and then kicks a football; a couple of fleas wearing skirts dance to the tinkling music of a little Swiss box. We are shown the "flea hotel", a box inlaid with mother-of-pearl; we are told the fleas are fed twice a day when working, and once a day when idle.

In "Roseland", a low-ceilinged modernized inferno of noise, the dark amber lights add to the unreality, while the swing orchestra blares with a ruthless swagger. Sales-girls, typists, telephone operators, manicurists and models dance with their boy friends, performing a smooth and complicated Lindy, modified to avoid accidents on such a crowded floor. They are like so many tadpoles spilled from their jam-jar. The violent "Shag", "Jeep" and "Duchin" are dance-steps of the past, and, although only a few years old, are considered "corny". But the Lindy Hop, originated in 1928, has survived. A change to "sweet" music turns the tadpoles into gaping goldfish as they circle slowly with gum-chewing jaws, "dipping" with bodies close and cheek next to cheek. The smell of double-mint gum permeates the atmosphere of this monstrous paradise of black, orange and pink. Women wear tense expressions as the men, buttocks protruding, bury their noses suffocatingly in their partners' hair. The "professionals" are in demand, and seem to be all tied up by the Navy. The young ensign picks the most blonde of all: the two crawl around in silence: the music stops, but the hands linger on the partner's back. The air is so thick that the attendant draws a venetian blind, letting in a jet of cold draught and the sunlight of Broadway lights below.

The cafeterias and "eat-shops" are crowded with people busy

reading the late papers. A crowd ceaselessly turns the subway turnstiles, as it heads for Greenwich Village, Harlem, Brooklyn, Jerome Avenue. . . .

II

Park Avenue, with wide doubled traffic separated by beds of burnt grass, is the quickest avenue along which to move up and down by car. Built only in the last thirty-five years, it contains the largest hotels and apartment houses. Fifth Avenue boasts the Empire State Building and Radio City, the tallest buildings in the world. It is perhaps inconsistent that New Yorkers, who have such a love for celebrities, do not know the names of their most brilliant architects. Consequently the work of Raymond Hood is insufficiently appreciated. Radio City was planned by Hood uniquely as a group of skyscrapers. Each building is relative to another in the general design, and the whole is connected by a world of shops, offices and restaurants honeycombing its base. All in one day it would be possible to breakfast, shop, have a hair-cut, skate, dine, dance, visit the consulates of six different countries, procure a passport, visit the Science Museum, lunch, enjoy movies projected on to the largest screen in the world, watch the radio performances of the National Broadcasting Company, or, from the plate-glass windows of the English grill, watch, while "canned" music plays selections from Meyerbeer and Waldteufel, the skaters waltzing around their sunken platform of ice. With its subterranean arcades, it is the logical extension of the skyscraper concept; for if you build ninety storeys high, why not build down a few floors too? Radio City is a city of twenty thousand inhabitants, with twelve acres devoted to business and entertainment, including two of the largest theatres in the world, and eighteen restaurants. It takes but twenty seconds to reach from the street level of the noisiest city to the quiet, crystal air and sunshine of a mountain peak on the 65th floor of the RCA building, which



is the tallest and central skyscraper of the group. From this pinnacle of luxury, one looks down on to the slums, tenements and eternal shops of up- and downtown New York, and far into the Bronx and Queens counties.

From this tower, Central Park appears, at first sight, to be deserted, and only by degrees do the small lice-like cars come into one's vision, as they move in crocodile formation along curved roads, laid out on no discernible plan. But if you descend from your eminence to walk in the park, you are struck by its curious, plantless desolation in comparison with the sophistication of the surrounding buildings. The dun-coloured, artificial hills remind you of a geographical model, and the winter trees are spidery and black. Great rocks, cannon-ball in colour, look artificial.

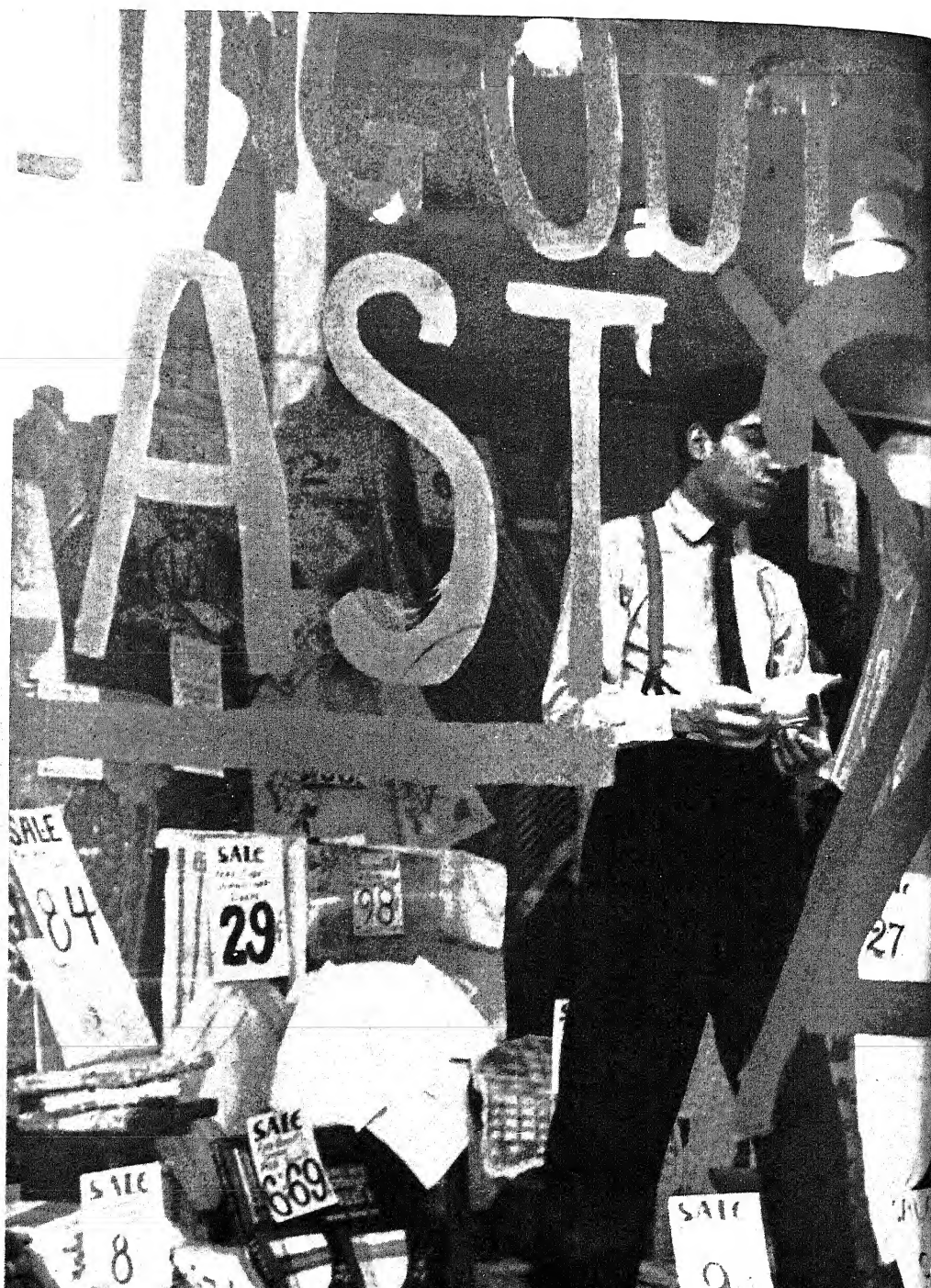
The statues in Central Park are an oddly assorted crowd of celebrities. Scott and Burns wonder to find themselves in the company of an unnamed boy with a horrible-looking dog. Three thousand miles from his native Stratford, Shakespeare reads his scroll, while Christopher Columbus, in bronze, points onwards and upwards.

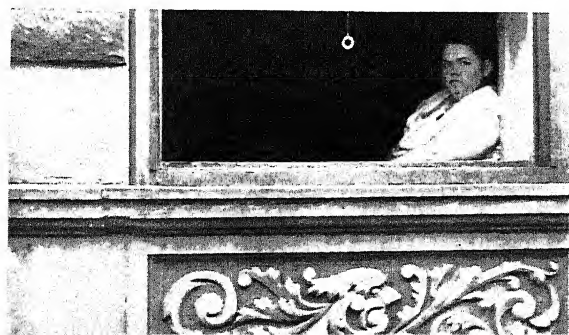
This park is like a landscape of some other planet. But on Sunday Central Park becomes human. It is the gambolling ground for parents, children, nursemaids and dogs. The perambulators, with babies half-visible beneath the coverlets, are wheeled three and four abreast. Unleashed dogs tear up and down the hillocks. A crowd collects, for a bulldog has caused a sensation in the dog world. A tremendous barking is set up, and on all sides distracted women tug vainly at their dogs on chains, which have sat down resolutely on their hind-quarters and now refuse to move from the scene of such drama.

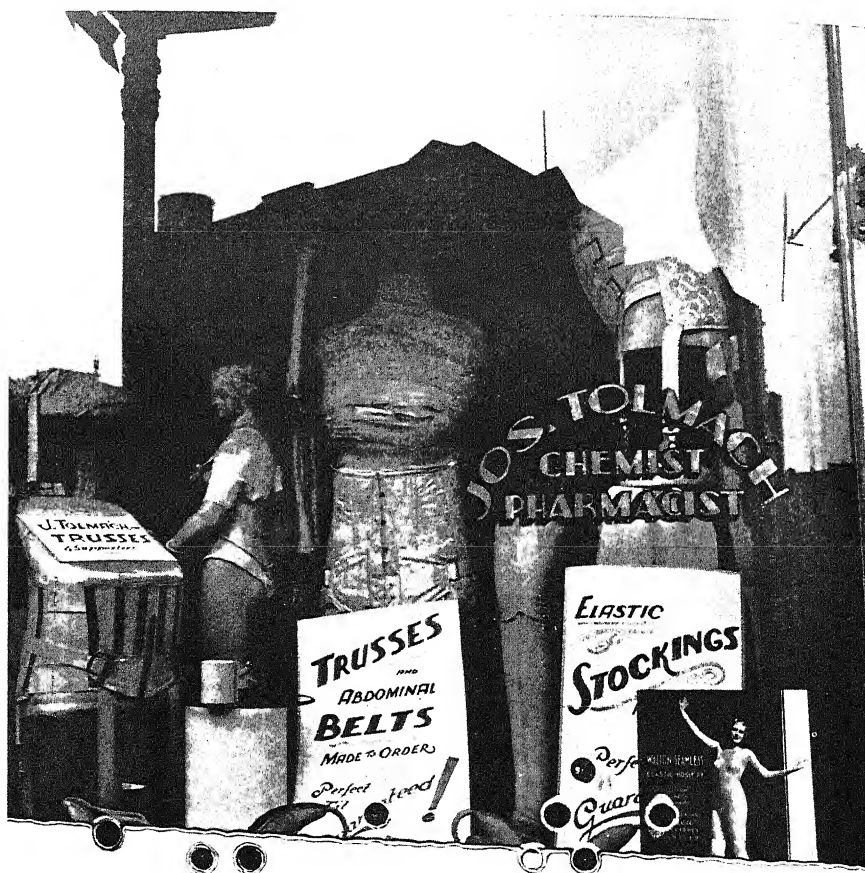
The skaters forgather on the asphalt of a circle near the Esplanade, where a crowd of fascinated pedestrians watch these other beings who seem to possess a superhuman speed and grace. A tough kid in corduroy, with gum, is waltzing in circles; a buffoon plays pranks and skates backwards; a girl with green handkerchief tied under her chin joins hands with a white-faced, dark-haired Bronzino-portrait type of young man. The quacking of the nearby ducks on the half-frozen pond can be heard from the highest windows in the surrounding skyscrapers.



THE BALCONY OF ILLUSION







WINDOW DRESSINGS

III

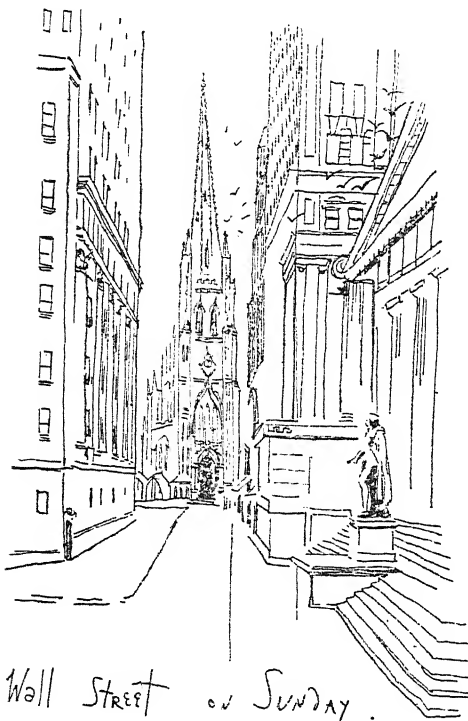
St. Paul's Church was built in a wheatfield in 1764. Although a contemporary newspaper described it as "so large and ornate a building in a place so remote and sequestered, so difficult of access, and to which the population could never extend", there has sprung up around it all the wild welter of twentieth-century downtown activity. Inside the church, in the musty odour of old buildings, a few figures kneel in prayer in George Washington's pew. In the graveyard outside, the tombstones, weathered by the passage of two hundred years, are softened by the sprouting spikes of hyacinth and crocus. The eye turns bewildered from the slogans of gilded signs in the street to the old inscriptions on the tombs. The voices of to-day proclaim: "Silk sport shirts", "Do you know what is always the correct thing to do?", "Hot fudge sundaes", "Genuine diamonds at low prices"; while an ancient stone tells us that beneath lies the body of "John Jones, the son of John Jones, who departed this life aged four years and four months, on December 13th in 1768. Ah, most cruel and sudden death; thus to take his harmless breath." Alongside the agency for "Witcherie Farms and real old Virginia Sausage", lie the remains of Eziral Wonsin, whose friends engraved on his tombstone: "Go home, my friend, and cease your tears, I must lie here till Christ appears. Repent in time while time you haive. There is no repentance in the grave." The young man on the hoarding, high up on the syndicate building, is asking the young girl to have a Coca Cola; beneath them, the old tablets are inscribed: "In memory of David McLean of Kilmarnock, Scotland, who died in this city of yellow fever in the midst of his usefulness."

IV

The plumes of steam from the city's heating plant, spouting at varying intervals from the underworld, are the only signs, on a Sunday, that Wall Street is not part of a long-forgotten, dead city. A few cars are abandoned at the roadside, but there is no policeman to ask questions. The unaccustomed quiet gives to the labyrinthine street the remoteness of a former civilization, the unreality of a Piranesi engraving. The black Gothic spike of Trinity Church seems unaccountably wedged between architectural clefts of office buildings,

and, in Exchange Street, the high bridge spanning the narrow street might be a bridge of sobs in an attenuated Venice.

The quiet is only dispelled at the hour by the chimes of the church clock. The green-throated pigeons fly down from their pediment home on the Treasury Building and circle in the air before alighting on the steps of Mr. Morgan's deserted bank, from which they are frightened by the sudden appearance of a stray dog.



This financial district is historically the oldest spot in New York City. In Pieter Stuyvesant's day, it was little more than a cowpath and the washerwomen of the Dutch colony washed their clothes in a stream which ran along what used to be called Pie Maiden's Lane, and is now Maiden Lane. To the north was Indian country.

V

Beyond the Battery, the prow of Manhattan, lies the water-front with its smells of salt, tar, rope, seaweed and decaying fish. Along South Street on the East Side, where the old Dutch houses stood, there are still some charming Colonial buildings, but they have been swallowed up by the dockland life. The red-brick building with wooden colonnades and the Madonna carved on the balcony is the Sailors' Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary. The tall building with the lighthouse beacon is the Seamen's Institute, and the old two-storeyed houses along Coenties Slip are painted red, yellow and green, and sell manila rope, wire and fishing tackle. In the markets

of the Franklin and Roosevelt Fish Companies, the vast silver and scarlet fishes and the insipid inflated fish from the Great Lakes are weighed in the hanging basket-scales. Barrels overflow with crawling snails, jerking crabs, and St. Vitus's dark-green lobsters, and there are clams, mussels and octopi to supply the whole of Manhattan. Along the wharves, their prows peering on to the highway, are the boats of every nationality waiting to start upon their voyages all over the world.

VI

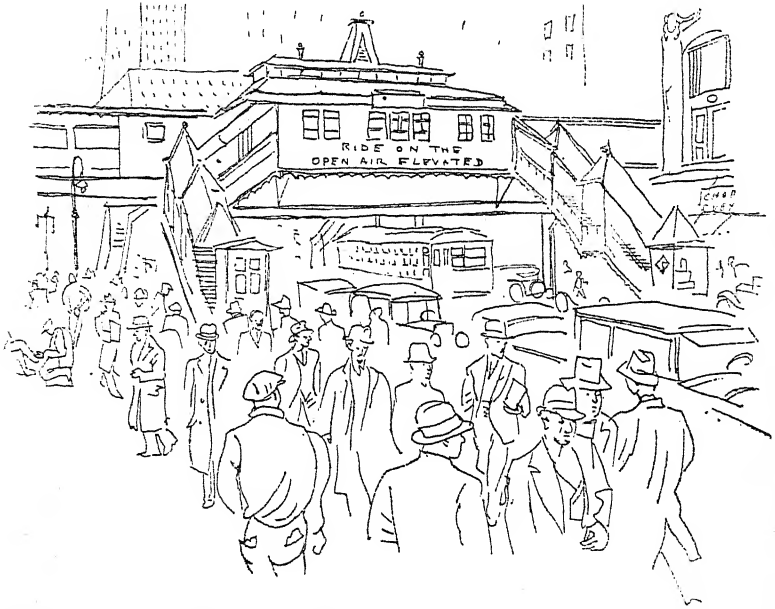
In spite of acute competition, certain streets will be devoted entirely to the sale of varieties of similar goods. Along one street each shop sells every sort of radio equipment; along another, all sorts of ecclesiastical appurtenances—brocades, ornaments, chalices, candlesticks and religious figures. By Ridge and Grand Streets one finds innumerable forms of truss or corselet, the windows creating a surrealist *mélange* of isolated limbs and torsos, bandaged and supported artificially, together with every sort of surgical aid—crutches, second-, third- and fourth-hand. Ten blocks are dedicated to the selling of Leghorn eggs.

In the Bowery's heart, in one of the poorest quarters, where not so long ago the worst slums of New York were pulled down, one street consists entirely of bridal shops. Both sides of Grand Street are devoted to windows displaying a pageant of life-size immaculate brides in static gesticulation. The snowy satin, lace, tulle veils and artificial flowers are dazzling. In the Ethel Shoppe, a bride and her entourage are so white that even their hair is white to match. The attendant bridesmaids are lined up, complete with bouquets and child train-bearers and pages. The corner-shop creates a nuptial apotheosis, with silver horseshoes, wedding bells, orange-blossom, photographs of wedding groups, and even a groom himself in faultless attire.

On Second Avenue, in an equally squalid district, a row of shops caters to the spirit of Mardi Gras, offering toy trumpets, tinsel hats, confetti, masks and favours. Where Second and Third Avenues begin, the pawnbrokers' windows display musical instruments, fishing tackle, baby boxing-gloves, slide-rules, pistols, typewriters and brass telescopes.

VII

In spite of its reputation and name, Hell's Kitchen, on Tenth Avenue (double-Fifth, as it is ironically called), is a colourless and ugly quarter. In no way spectacular, its present claim to fame can only be that the Irish-Italian children living in the flat houses have no opportunity to play anywhere but in the street, and grow up with a social trauma which may lead to criminality at its worst, or, at its



mildest, a poor understanding of the rights of others. But to visit the Bowery is like visiting another city. The "triumphal arch" of the Bowery (actually the arch of the Williamsburg Bridge) might be the salient feature of a Chicago, Philadelphia or Kansas City. The vast grey façades of the office buildings have not the lightness of New York skyscrapers; there are no sequins glittering in the windows; the atmosphere is heavy and sinister. The electric signs shine less sparkingly as they proclaim "Hotel for Men—Bed 25 cents." To the Bowery descends all surplus human matter. Those who have failed to "make good", who have fallen through alcoholism, despair, hard luck or environmental handicap, here must eke out a colourless

existence, for the Bowery is no longer the full-blooded centre of fighting and drinking with which its name was once synonymous. No contemporary dirty-face Jack pulls a revolver in a saloon. Hell-cat Maggie's day has long been over, and few women are seen in the heart of the Bowery. It is too poor a district for them. Only men are to be seen in the streets, or eating in the Park Row restaurants, whose plate-glass windows advertise in Bon Ami lettering the cheap food featured there. This is the section of the "flop-houses", where many beds, crowded into one room, make a nightmare dormitory. Each night some man dies loudly in his bed. A few missions maintain a wavering light of Christianity here, and Tom Noonan's Bowery Mission proclaims: "If you haven't a friend left in the world, you are always welcome here."

"Sammy's Bowery Follies" remains part of the Old Bowery of the 'nineties, with its antiquated vaudeville and sentimental *bonhomie*. A three-piece ensemble plays "By the Sea" and an aged woman, of enormous proportions, dressed in sequins and feathers, kicks her legs in the air as she sings the old songs and then joins the guests for a free drink.

But the happiest locales in the Bowery are the barbers' shops, with the red, white and blue poles outside. Here, any old bum, for fifteen cents, can enjoy the luxury of hot-towel and tender soapy ministrations. In the Bowery barber college, an aged tramp is lying in his bliss, while the barber, having already shaved him, rubs his wrinkled face with lotion. On the foot-rests below, where the white sheet ends, protrude a pair of boots that would have delighted Van Gogh.

The barbers' shops include tattooing as part of their business, and the windows display birds, butterflies, serpents and anchors as examples of tattoo art. "Kid Tou" is the master tattooer, and "Frenchie Sailor White" exhibits photographs of his clients. An enormous wrestler is shown, both from the front and the back, with tattooing like lace over his entire body. A string of birds flies around his neck, Our Lord, with rayed aura, has pride of place on the solar plexus, and, on closer inspection, the *derrière* proves to be a bower of roses. This wrestler is a living piece of chintz, a dilating and inflating *toile de Jouy*. One out of every ten Americans is tattooed. In the Bowery, a broken heart costs twenty-five cents, Leonardo's

"Last Supper" a hundred dollars. An invitation is tendered by the Tattoo Boys' Club for a dance next Saturday evening; the entrance fee is stipulated, but no intimation is given as to the form of dress.

Where blows are so frequent an occurrence, the bill-boards advertise experts in the treatment of all injuries. Vast all-seeing eyes, like surrealist symbols, accompany the sign-painters' proclamations: "Black Eyes Made Natural", "Original Black Eye Painters—Twenty Years' Experience". We see examples of "before and after" the craftsman has been at work.

Down the steep steps, each of which is marked with the words "Progress Hotel—Progress Hotel—Progress Hotel", two old men advance. They shamble through the doorway, stop for a moment to share a swig of gin from a medicine bottle (many of them have stomachs so inured that they can eat, without being seriously affected, Canned Sterno, "the drink you eat with a spoon"), and join the crowds that move out of sight beyond the clock that indicates, simultaneously, the time in Moscow, Tokyo, Rome, San Francisco and here, in the Bowery.

VIII

Every twenty-five years the social sections change. Some rents drop, undesirable neighbours appear and the original community moves away. The group that centred in Canal Street moved to Washington Square; from thence to Chelsea and on to Murray Hill. Murray Hill was the social vortex of the gay 'nineties which spun around Stanford White, the elegant architect of his day. The Murray Hill Association ruled that no buildings could be used for business purposes in this neighbourhood, and the Messrs. Morgan, Baker and Huntingdon, confident of respectability, built themselves mansions in the style of some antique period. When the Murray Hill Association considered an apartment as a residence the heyday of Murray Hill was over. The apartment buildings, twenty storeys high, overwhelmed the private houses, and even the church at 34th Street was embedded. Now, as the Murray Hill Hotel itself is to be torn down, one of the last preserved landmarks of that period will vanish.

The inevitable moving-on has claimed, in turn, Lower Fifth Avenue, Central Park and Upper Fifth Avenue, and those districts on the East River where the sunlight pours through the windows at

breakfast-time and the boats pass in endless pageants. To-day along Riverside Drive great dough-coloured cement towers hover over the houses given as parting presents by the Edwardian beaux to retired actresses and cocottes. In these apartment blocks, with their hundreds of identical windows, the rubber plant or cactus, as it fights for existence over the radiator, is the only expression of freedom. There are five miles of these same blocks, with twenty blocks to a mile. Fifty yards away from this sunless district, the cars dash arrogantly along Commissioner Moses' Speedway Drive from the Battery to the Harlem River, their occupants oblivious of the houses that were once so proud. But the rock deposits brought down from New England by the glaciers twenty-five thousand years ago adapt themselves, naturally, to the modern plan, and the strange formations that flank the clover-leaf turns of the Drive seem to be part of the foundations for an elaborate rockery scheme.

IX

On the West Side, in the "Fifties", a red-brick hotel shelters a group of English immigrants against the prevailing characteristics of the city in which they find themselves spending their fading days. Except for the stifling steam heat, the atmosphere is that of a residential spa hotel anywhere in England. On the settee in the hall, so that she can enjoy scraps of conversation with those who walk in and out, sits an old English lady. Her skin is lividly white, and her wig looks like cotton-wool which has been dipped in treacle. In her lap is her "bait"—a skinny dog with huge eyes and butterfly-wing ears. In the *va-et-vient* Rosie is sure to be picked out for attention. . . . "Is Rosie a bright dog?" "Oh, she can pick up a trick in no time, she's *exceptional* . . ." Thence on to bird and baby noises and to the gossip of the day.

A "confirmed bachelor" with grey hair passes a certain time of the day with Rosie and her owner. "How long did your tulips last?" he asks. "The next day? Mine lasted until yesterday; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday—that's four days, and do you know how much they cost? Thirty-eight cents; about two shillings!" "I don't hear you unless you're facing me." "Oh, you read the lips?" "No, I don't; I have to turn my head or I can't hear you . . ." "Did you go out in evening clothes the other night? Mr. Schneider said

he saw two ladies go out and one of them wore a gown he made on Seventh Avenue two years ago. He saw enough of it to recognize it. You know Mr. Schneider styled the dresses that Mrs. Roosevelt used to wear at the Inaugurations. He styles dresses for a wholesale place and they sell them retail. Well, it must have been his dress because he said he saw enough of it to recognize it . . .” “It does you good to go out once and again. It keeps your spirits up.” “I’m getting into awful hot water. I asked two ladies to come in and play bridge to-morrow night and I had entirely forgotten I was asked somewhere else! Tch! Tch! Tch! Well, Rosie, I think I’ll wave bye-bye. Well, bye-bye, Rosie.”

The elevator rattles upstairs to a room where the once great actress now gives elocution lessons. Lengths of brocade are draped on every piece of furniture. The lamps are hung with large bags. Telegrams and photographs are pinned into permanent disorder. “Oh, I’m so tired. My pupils read so *badly*. I’ve one woman who teaches in a school and she reads Milton to me, oh, so badly! She *can’t* keep her voice up, and she crashes on and on, incapable of understanding a half-beat. She never pauses before a He with a capital H, and says He as if God were the butcher boy; and she cannot put the reverence into Our Maker, and gabbles on as if it was ‘our dressmaker’! And I told a man he must go and see a doctor about his legs; you *can’t* be an actor if your legs are hung on strings like a marionette’s. You can’t be an actor if you don’t act from the legs down; just as you must have deep hands, I told him, and learn to keep the voice down. You can’t have that nasal tone that women use to their husbands if they don’t love them. You can’t speak Shakespeare as if the words were your own; you wouldn’t recite the Psalms of David as if you had written them yourself? Now listen to this.” A beautiful ululation is heard: “‘Come nott when I am deaghd, your foolish teahrs to dropp about my headhdd. Thairr let the wind sigh, and the plover cry. . . .’ Now, you see you *can’t* speak those words in an off-hand way! Oh, when I *think* of Sarah as Pelléas and I see Orson Welles behaving like an obstetrician, I don’t know what the theatre’s coming to.”

Framed in the windows opposite is a living Degas created by the American Ballet School at rehearsal. The piano cannot be heard, and twenty ballerinas in white tulle, with coronets of white flowers,

are impelled, as if by magic, to a soundless interweaving of rhythms.

X

The quiet and seemingly isolated district of Chelsea has been inhabited, since the eighteenth century, by the Irish. The dark green and crimson ironwork balconies are like those along the Thames embankment, and the superintendent doormen, rather self-consciously dressed as London bobbies, intensify the British atmosphere.

Greenwich Village has for some time been more bourgeois than Bohemian. The artists' quarter has yielded to slums or commercialism. To lure sightseers, certain restaurants are still tricked out in the frills of Bohemia. Romany Marie tells fortunes for her dinner clients and the jumble shop displays on its walls half-scribbled notes by Thomas Wolfe. The "Vanguard" is no longer the last stronghold of the poets and artists, who brought their own liquor and entertained each other with impromptu acts, but it is like any other village night-club for tourists. The Pepper Pot, Pastor's and the McDougal Tavern still persist. Landmarks remain: the arch originally erected as a temporary tribute to Washington and the huge brick mass of the women's gaol, looking like an apartment house beside the ornate tower of the Jefferson Court House. Number one Fifth Avenue, the block built twenty years ago by Archipenko, is no longer strikingly modern, and Mrs. Whitney's museum, spruce and smart for such an environment, still hopes wistfully to discover a genius. But no great struggle persists in Greenwich Village. Continental restaurants have, many of them, failed and closed their doors; the aspiring poets, working in gas-lit rooms with splintered floors, unable to pay their six dollars a week rent, have moved elsewhere, perhaps to one of Mr. Luce's magazines, or to the "soulless world of commerce".

Washington Square, in another age the most fashionable neighbourhood and centre of Irving's "Knickerbocker Society", with charming, uniform houses of red brick, retains what Henry James described as "established repose". Bobbles, like the fringes of Edith Wharton's antimacassars, still hang from the plane trees with their artificially sun-dappled bark.

Life in the Village could be very pleasant: the houses are charming

and restful: the atmosphere of Patchen Place is that of Jane Austen's day: McDougall Alley has houses like those in an English mews, but few people come through the white doors, no sound is heard behind the white windows and deserted poverty is accentuated by the unloading of rejected oil-paintings.

XI

New York contains vast foreign cities within itself. Some sections are so large that they comprise the largest Italian and Jewish cities in the world. The various races of Manhattan group themselves as in Europe. The Spaniards are the neighbours of the French, the Germans of the Austrians, and the Greeks are situated behind the Italians. But so great is the intrinsic personality of New York, that even those immigrants who have not learned to speak the language have become impregnated by the national character: in every foreign quarter New York asserts itself.

Turning out of the Bowery into narrow Pell Street, Chinatown's Broadway, the sudden quiet creates the impression that most people here must be hidden in opium dreams. But despite our romantic wishes, opium dens and tong wars are dim memories of another day. Aside from their quiet and reserve, and their beautiful oriental faces, the people in the street are very American. Several young Chinese boys hurry by, wearing "pea" jackets and tweed pants. They are talking rapidly in Chinese, but the animated tones would indicate that the subject is probably a football game. An old man sits by a few pieces of sugar-cane propped against the wall. Chinese written characters are on some walls, ladders of exquisite ciphers, like the imprints of birds' feet. The old tenement houses have painted fronts of all colours—dark red, crimson and pale almond green. The sky seems to glow a deeper blue above the coloured lights of the tea-roofs and of the festooned oriental balconies. The scene resembles more a picture postcard, with the colours impatiently overdone. The shop windows display rice and almond cakes, dried lichee nuts, back-scratchers, porcelain tablespoons, caddies of jasmine tea, bamboo flutes, paper dragons pleated like accordions, and the three wise monkeys in soapstone. The windows of the numerous curio shops are flooded with cinnabar rings, jade rings, and elaborately carved ivory balls within balls, as complex as a Russian Easter egg.

Yet everywhere the prices recall New York, marked in fractions of a dollar. These magnificent displays are largely for the benefit of tourists. The Chinese kimonos are of the thinnest, shiniest, carnation-pink silk, gaudily embroidered in sequins; the handkerchiefs are like tissue paper. Modernity intrudes as neon signs advertise "China Clipper Restaurant", "Hang Far Low-Cantonese Dishes", "Port Arthur Bar", and so incongruous does the modernistic spire of the Chrysler Building appear that it is as if some stage-hand had carelessly lowered the wrong backdrop.

On entering one of the curio shops, an old man shuffles in from a back room, wearing Chinese slippers. He speaks in an impossible quasi-English and firmly fails to understand should he be asked to fetch something not already on display. He keeps pointing to the counters to indicate that whatever you might want is here on view. His stubborn placidity exasperates. Impatiently, you buy the dusty bouquet of feather flowers from the counter, well aware that a fresh bouquet will appear the moment after your departure.

The windows of Quon Hing's grocery store has a huge array of Chinese cabbage, bamboo sprouts, and other unusual vegetables grown on Long Island.

At Sun Kung On Company, dried herbs are heaped in twisted abandon, love potions and teas are lined up next to each other. The labels indicate medicinal teas, perfumed teas. One box is full of dried sea-horses, which herbally also contain some medicinal value.

Several impassive Chinamen, neat and orderly in Homburg hats and immaculate collars, are enjoying a late luncheon with a certain pride at Sun King's coffee shop. The tea is made in a flowered-pink china cup, over which a similar cup is upturned, and the sound of the group slowly talking while they await the brewing of the tea is like quiet singing.

The Chinese restaurants serve a steaming array of delicacies to dinner patrons. From their immaculate kitchens (Board of Health surveys prove Chinese kitchens cleanest of all) the dishes come forth—onions stuffed with pork and vegetables, shrimp balls, lobster Cantonese style, roast duck with orange sauce and nuts, steamed cakes that are light as angel cakes, and rice biscuits, crisp as wafers.

"Visit the Chinese Temple, one flight up." On the stairs you have to run interference, for there is a group of tourists coming down.

Their guide waits outside. The atmosphere in the temple is artificial and disappointing. The placid statue of Buddha sits among its incense fumes, and watches very American and smartly dressed sales-people "giving the business" to a few remaining tourists. "See this lovely old altar carved out of teakwood"—but the altar is a monstrous thing. You turn to leave, past the Chinese gong which probably has a counterpart of equal quality and antiquity in half the hotels of Brighton. Your resentment is increased by the feeling that the Chinese salespeople assume you are sufficiently gullible to find their chatter of interest. But undoubtedly there are many curio hunters who point indiscriminately round the shops at china and pottery figures, asking about each one: "Is that Confucius?" To them, Chinatown is merely an oriental sideshow in which these immobile men and women are part of the amusement.

The general standard of living in Chinatown is higher than in the neighbouring Bowery. Most of the inhabitants work in restaurants and laundries. They do not wear Chinese clothes, even in the homes, but it is still the custom to bury the dead in their native China. Only the wealthiest Chinese can afford to ship bodies to China; the poor bury their dead in America, and after ten years the remaining bones can be fitted into a small zinc box, which at a minimum cost is shipped to China for reburial.

XII

Nearly two million Jewish people, with their own theatres, restaurants, newspaper and synagogues, have made Manhattan their home. The poor Jewish quarter is situated down on the East Side of the city. The first impression is one of unbroken poverty; the colour of the streets is melancholy in the extreme—dun-grey, slate-coloured. Over towards the East River the rebuilding is going on, and the tenements are slowly disappearing, but it will be years before all the slums are gone.

Neutral-coloured bedclothes and eiderdowns, on their daily airing, bulge through the windows of the upper storeys of the apartment houses and reflect the extraordinary cleanliness of the people. In most cities a quarter of such dreary poverty would contain a crushed and lifeless population. Here the impression given by the inhabitants is one of intense vitality. This dynamism is a tribute to a noble

people who, through sufferings and hardships here and in other places of the world, have maintained lives of warmth and love, admirable family ties, and generosity both within and without their community centres. The Jewish influence on the cultural life of New York has been responsible for the high level of appreciation in music, literature, and others of the seven arts.

The crowded houses have overflowed into the streets, and the traders avoid the expense of rent by piling their merchandise on to



pushcarts, heaping it on the doorsteps and hanging it upon their persons. A most animated trade is carried on around these centres. Anything can be bought—shoe-laces, pickles, houseware, expensive furs. Yiddish is commonly heard in these streets.

A bearded Rabbi appears, his locks straying beneath his black *yarmaka*, and his long black robe makes him striking in his personal dignity. He passes the shop where suits are sponged and pressed for twenty cents, and the housefronts camouflaged behind masses of old pots and clothing exposed for sale; he passes all the manifestations of the poverty of his people, but from his warm nods to left and right you see that he is not ashamed of this poverty, for it is only the outward trappings. He disappears into the store where

Hebrew books are sold. Small bonfires are built at regular intervals along the kerb, and odd pieces of clothing, wood and rubbish are added to the flare. Around these oases in the desert created by the biting winds which seem to impoverish everything they lash, the crowd becomes thicker and the accumulated noises swell and rise, a testimony to the ebb and flow of the market-place.

XIII

The Spanish section is to be found in the neighbourhood of 112th Street. The walls, chalked with English words spelt as if they were Spanish, only hint at the intensely tragic undercurrent of the lives of the Spanish, Portuguese, Porto Ricans, Negroes and the many people of indeterminate racial extraction who live in this district.

A group of sloe-eyed, dark-skinned girls pass, carrying school books. Their faces possess the mystery inherent to their race. Outside the Puerto-Rican Employment Agency a group of men stand talking; they are all dressed poorly, some are unshaven, each reflecting his plight of living on the harshest extravagances of poverty. Nearby some Spanish children are baiting a Pomeranian, while its mistress, a fat *senorita* with plucked eyebrows and lowered eyelids, sits on a kitchen chair in the doorway, perhaps dreaming of Barcelona, for she is apparently unmindful of the children, the dog, and the north-easterly cold. The children have a sordid universe for their playground. The street and the sidewalks are their day-nursery. The stone pavement can be elaborately marble-ized with chalk, or decorated with prehistoric designs. The walls are there for patterning with hearts of every different size and the advice that "Carmen Robinson loves Jack de Cubas". Infinite pleasure is found in camouflaging the billboards and in adding a moustache to Gene Tierney. But the gutter affords the greatest variety of all pleasure, with the quiet game of marbles in the mud or the impromptu burning of the contents of a dustbin; the air is filled with a pungent smoke, and clouds of black specks whirl in the sudden gusts of wind as the waifs create a glaze from the bonfire of wooden boxes on which matting and newspapers are piled.

Most of the restaurants and shops advertise in Spanish: *Farmacia San Rafael*, Restaurant *Mi Margarita* and *El Arte Espiritual*, with its religious statues, cards and crosses. Torn posters inquire: "Que

hace tu para posta?"—or proclaim: "Quidocion en menestra." Coloured picture postcards, poisonously tinted in puce, violet and emerald green originate from Spain, and the films at El Cine are Spanish without English sub-titles. The restaurants are dirty, and the Spanish food ill-prepared: the meat greasy, the beans no good. Only the pastillyas, the bloated scimitar-shaped meat-pies, are interesting to the palate. The "juke" box has all Spanish records in it. The three floors of the building which used to comprise the State



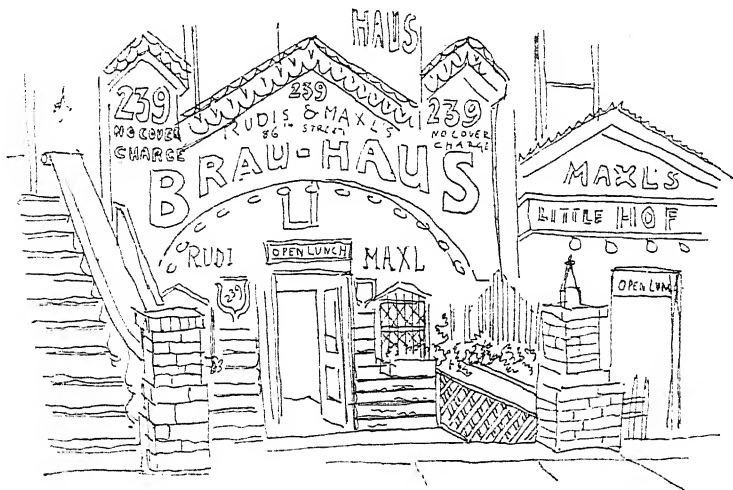
Bank are now allocated to separate Spanish activities. On the ground floor is a restaurant bar where you can dine and dance. On the top floor is the Sporting Club or Workers' Alliance, and between the two is squeezed Christianity in the form of the *Iglesia de Cristo*, its outside walls painted in stripes of pink, blue and black. The architecture of some of these old-fashioned houses is truly Spanish, with ornate fruit mouldings over the windows and an elaborate decoration of iron fire-escapes that run diagonally, like lightning, down the walls. Shops sell masses of oranges, not from Seville, but from California, and *leche* (Borden's), "*Las Delicias*" (including Spearmint and Coco Cola).

In the rather barren amusement park nearby the children swing in little wooden frames like bird-cages, and play soft-ball; while the grown-up boys, in purple, rose and blue sweaters, play basket-ball

by the hour with a sustained enthusiasm that resembles a calm. Their faces are entranced and their limbs caught for ever in an exercise of perpetual motion. From the observatory tower, on the summit of the mountain of lava-like rock above them, they bring to mind the familiar Brueghel figures of skaters in his pictures of winter.

XIV

Around 86th Street, east of Lexington Avenue, the German quarter is known as Yorkville. Its population has decreased considerably, due to the emigration of Germans to Sunnyside, Queens, during the early part of World War II. The buildings are not tall, but they are essentially American. Yet, undaunted, the German landlords have



ignored the three-floor façades and have built a row of excrescent bungalows; fancy tile-work shacks with oak doors and peasant windows give upon the sidewalk, and proclaim themselves as beer-halls, the "Café Mozart", "The Lorelei", "Café Hindenburg", "Fritz's 218 Club", or "Rheinland Café". There is a "Wurstgeschäft", a delicatessen with fancy German sausages lining the windows. The candy shops display boxes of marzipan fruits, and *kartoffellen*. "Deutsche Bücher" displays volumes in German; and the Casino Theatre shows German movies. The travel agencies no longer advertise trips to Germany, but their windows suggest that food and

clothing packages can be sent to Germany at a moderate cost, and a typical package displayed consists of canned goods, powdered eggs, chocolate bars and cigarettes.

Nearer to First Avenue, the Hungarian section is recognizable only by the names on the shop-fronts: SMEYKOL, SOVAK, SAUZLIK, KLIPA. In the junk-shop nothing is considered unworthy of presentation or too mean in expectation of a sale. Next door the windows advertise: "Funeral complete with this casket, one hundred and fifty dollars." The casket is upholstered in grey velvet. For two hundred and seventy-five dollars you can have a casket of white silk lined with quilted satin, but the last word in coffins is "the stream-lined".

XV

A surprising change of character can take place from one parallel street to another. The melancholy poverty of the Bowery is at once dispelled by the gaiety in the neighbouring street, which is part of New York's Italy. Here one finds the same tenement buildings, but the atmosphere is gay, unlike that of Spanish Harlem. The Italians have a *bon vivant* spirit, and even the washing hanging on lines strung from windows seems to have a life of its own. A *Commedia dell' Arte* harlequinade atmosphere prevails. The shop-fronts are *en fête*, garlanded with cheeses and sausages of every flavour and colour. Italian pushcarts, a counterpart to the Jewish pushcarts, line the narrow sidewalks, and are heaped high with red and green peppers and glossy purple egg-plants. In the shops, dried red peppers hang like bouquets of monster raisins and silver-fish, like sun-ray medallions, are pressed into circular boxes and placed on end. Mounds of *finocchi*, a highly coloured cousin of celery, and a variety of other green vegetables, are stacked high. Italian breads are on display and the customer watches doughnuts being made on a huge pan of boiling fat. Barrels of floating pickles help to make shopping a spirited adventure.

Street festivals are a frequent occurrence in Little Italy. To-night is the Feast of San Gennaro. The streets are hung with scallops of lights, and impromptu bandstands, highly coloured in their paper decorations, are stanchioned on each side of the road. The rival orchestras will be vying *Traviata* successfully against *Le Torna a Sorriento*. Fortunes will be told, and the Catholic crowd will throng

the streets, genuflecting and crossing itself before the shrines of flaxen-haired Madonnas and votive waxen limbs.

At the Salmaggi opera in Brooklyn, *Lucia* is being sung to-night. Anticipating the event, a dark-haired boy weighing bananas is whistling the *Sextette*.

XVI

Looking north from the green and gold cupola of the Grand Central Terminus, festooned lights scale over rising ground to 62nd Street, where Park Avenue ends in the sky. From this hill a second horizon is framed between the parallel silhouettes of distant houses. Here the white rainbow ends, for beyond lies Harlem, the negro section of Manhattan. Most of Harlem consists of terrible slums, overpopulated and ill-lit. Landlords exploit the negro tenants unjustly and rents are proportionately higher here than in any other section of New York City. In three square miles, over three hundred thousand negroes live in squalor. A few wealthy negroes live on "Sugar Hill", and 144th and 145th Streets, near St. Nicholas Avenue, boast some elegant apartment houses; but poverty is the key-note in Harlem.

Some of the grandest Fifth Avenue houses are only a few blocks away from the "Hot Bed Houses" called Home by coloured workers, who rent the beds that are let out in three eight-hour shifts throughout the twenty-four. Many Manhattan negroes do not live in Harlem, and, though conspicuous, are to be seen in the streets of every part of the Island; but a white resident in Harlem is a rarity. It is a specialized district, a negro reservation in a white man's city. Harlem, a hundred years ago, was the Haarlem of Dutch settlers, and only since 1900 have negroes settled in it. It was after the fourth great race riot in New York City that a few negro families moved up to Harlem. White families living there at the time reacted with violent prejudice, attempted in vain to oust the negroes and eventually moved away. Harlem continued to grow, and the influx of coloured people from the cotton-field of the South reached enormous proportions after 1910. A move was started after the First World War by Northern industrialists to import the negroes and exploit them at low wages, and another influx during the depression of the 'thirties again increased the population.

At the corner of Lennox Avenue and 144th Street, the heart of the "Black Belt", a negro constable signals a bus so crowded with humanity that one is reminded of cooped hens going to market. The lights change, and the coloured pedestrians saunter before the waiting traffic with the confidence only the red light can give.

The girl in purple checks, with viridian spotted veil and gardenias, blue lips and a voice like a bell, is gaily feckless as she wheels a perambulator—"I didn't give my mother no special time I'd be home." Brightly coloured automobiles are at the kerbs. The street sellers chant of their wares—corn pone and fish cakes, devilled crabs and sweet potatoes.

Wearing apparel covers a range of extremes. The street loiterers are depressingly dressed, as are many of the children, their rags a testimony of poverty, but those who are able to afford them display the latest in negro fashions. Individuality counts, and many among this flat-footed crowd, hurrying with their delightfully springing, jerky walk, wear intricately cut and pleated jackets in colours chosen from a bold palette.

Many negroes are deeply religious, and this no doubt has its roots in the desire for escape from an unbearable psychological and sociological reality. The kaleidoscope of life in and about these slum tenements is often raw and malign, but it is a paradox of the negro people that, many of them having become permanently traumatized by their slum environment, they nevertheless live on a plane of astonishing intensity, emphasizing the bizarre and the vigorous. Beneath a surface gaiety, there exists a bitter outlook, a cynicism nourished by the chauvinism of the white people, for hundreds of times a day, in all ways, most negroes are made aware of the eternal fires of race prejudice. Yet Harlem has few full-blooded black men; its citizens are an indeterminate mixture of red, brown, yellow, white and black, and there have been thirty or forty years of intermingling. More than two-thirds of American negroes have white ancestry. Social conditions create a high percentage of prostitution in Harlem; and among men, it breeds criminality. "Muggers" lurk in dark streets for their victims. Even those who lead respectable lives are affected, directly or indirectly, by these activities. Almost every store is a trade place for the "numbers" racket, and children growing up in such surroundings see the

big-timers who have made money by turning to crime. Harlem schools are so crowded that a two- or three-shift day is planned, thus turning the children out on to the streets with hours to waste. Recreational facilities are few and juvenile delinquency has become a tragic problem.

A white youth with girlish hands, his face slashed, his eyes blood-filled, fumbles into a taxi. Perhaps negroes have beaten him up. Nobody knows or cares why. The fact that he is white was in this case probably irrelevant, but there have been serious race riots in Harlem, when coloured mob violence has made it unsafe for any white man to walk in the streets. It might be added in corollary that certain cities of the United States have seen an equally terrifying white mob violence against the negro.

The glow of the Apollo Theatre's running lights dispels the slate-grey fog. White lights advertise grade B movies and opus orchestra stage shows, and *Tarzan and the Green Goddess* are this week's attractions. Stuffed lions and tigers in the lobby burlesque the jungle origins from which these people's ancestors came, a proud race robbed of its pride by the unscrupulously enterprising white men.

XVII

The Harlem photographer may be called upon to take a picture of anything from a high-yellow fiancée to an intricate scalp operation. On the screens outside his shop are displayed grandiose wedding groups. A black bride in tulle frills is proudly flanked by her faultlessly dressed groom and bridesmaids. Inside you see further proof of the camera-man's craft. With a passivity foreign to New York, the exponent shows an extraordinary collection of photographs taken in the ordinary course of his work. In Harlem he is called upon to capture the tragedy as well as the happiness in life, turning his camera on death or marriage with the same detachment.

"Apotheosis" pictures are this photographer's speciality. He shows one which is his particular pride. The corpse lies in a casket lined with quilted satin, surrounded by wreaths of hired, waxen flowers. Into the picture he has incorporated sentimental views of the victim taken at various times in life. He has superimposed bars of hymns, lines of sentimental poetry, doves, and "faded in" reproductions of

religious oleographs of the Saviour, with arms outstretched in welcome.

"This was a pneumonia kid," he explains, as he shows a microscopic black baby lying on a silken bed beside a huge white chrysanthemum. "This woman was poisoned by her girl friend." For years they had lived together, he tells us, then she got married and they all three lived together. The bride never felt well, and she died when her baby was born, killed by a slow poison that only became fatal at conception. We see the dead woman in a bower of bouquets, the solemn widower, in formal morning coat, stands by the lid of the coffin. Another man was run over by a tram. The exact cause of death in yet another case was forgotten, but the funeral had been "wonderful", with "fifty cars".

The photographer proudly shows us proofs which have been retouched, explaining that, for the family's sake, the young man who had been killed in a street accident had needed beautifying, but the retouching had failed to erase the frown suggestive of a sleeper troubled by unpleasant dreams.

Negroes are often involved in litigation, and an important part of the photographer's work is to supply documentary evidence to support claims for compensation. "This was a ceiling that fell down." The victim, head swathed in bandages, lies beneath a hole in the ceiling of a shabby bedroom, surrounded by fallen plaster. A photograph of a naked negress lying on her back, a laced seam running the length of her torso, is evidence to be used in a claim for damages for an operation performed without her consent. Another nude, a human pebble-dash wall, claims against the patent-medicine firm believed to have caused the outbreak.

To the photographer this collection is not without its humour. A photograph of a carton of cooked ham and eggs shows the head of a cockroach leering from it. More grim relics follow, including autopsy pictures in which the bodies look no more human than the charts and diagrams in medical text-books. Here a scalp is cut off, and turned back from the brain, and, in another exposure, it is turned forward on to the face, to look like some ghastly bearded joke.

XVIII

A wealthy negro is host to fifty of his coloured friends in his penthouse. He gives parties because he enjoys it, because he has a reputation for giving parties. Since he is not burdened with social aspirations, some of the guests are not wealthy, but possess intelligence or artistic ability. As each new guest arrives, the host shouts introductions: "Folks, this is a great friend of mine, a very distinguished taxidermist. . . . And, ladies and gen'lemen, this is the brother of an Irish poet—we're gettin' to be a League of Nations round here."

"Who is the man singing?"

"Oh, who knows? He's a professional."

The cocktail bar in the kitchen is the focal point of activity. For hours these people, many of them more than a little drunk, have been standing about in formal groups, making polite and delicate conversation. A grave, quietly dressed negro, who works in the City Administration and is a member of the Communist Party, is asking detailed and intelligent questions about the British Communists. The pianist asks after Lord Tredegar. A rather lovely young girl from Haiti has become somewhat drunkenly belligerent.

"I loathe this condescension. We are being served to you on a platter, to sing songs that imply mockery of our race."

Later she calms, and explains that she is studying Rural Education and Marxism. An elderly negro interrupts to widen the discussion in terms of Pareto and Spengler.

"You Marxists are looking so far ahead—it amounts to defeatism, Utopianism. At least we must keep the qualities that are now in danger—at all costs, those of intellectual integrity," he says. "Communists have the right approach, in a way, but they stand to leave behind in the struggle what little humanism there is left."

At the piano, a serious little man begins to recite some mediocre verse in a tragic voice, with exaggerated gestures.

"Do you know the theory of aides?" the elderly negro asks.

The Haitian girl is quoting *Das Kapital*. Leaning against the bar, an octaroon, beautiful and almost white, highball in hand, dilates on the miseries of her lot.

"I dislike the blacks more than the whites," she declares. "They

smile and pretend friendship, but behind my back they tell my boss I'm black, and I'm fired. And if whites get friendly, they find out some time. I wish to hell I was pure white."

"No, but you see, from a dialectical point of view. . . ."

"We are the only people here who can talk about Pareto, eh?"

Fifteen winters ago a different night-club was popular for every hour from midnight to sunrise. Now only the Savoy Ballroom, where Harlem's negroes exercise themselves to the best coloured band, still retains its genuine gaiety. The negro taking entrance-tickets shouts: "Check your stash, man. You can't walk around with that quaffed brew. All gents gotta check hats and coats." Downstairs the dandy in the cigar-leaf suit winks at the hat-check girl: "Hang it up next to a nice clean one, chick."

The ballroom ceiling is low. Under red and orange lights legs flail and twine, stamp and wriggle. Legs in purple, legs in checks, legs in evening black, in brown, in tweed skirts and evening dresses are wildly juggling, turning and twisting to the rhythm of the music while the dark hands keep a facetious syncopation of their own as the partners are tossed out, boogie-woogied, and returned to home with lascivious contortions of the torso. With childishly ecstatic faces, everyone looks happy, and everyone wears a look of proud vitality. "Prosperous" residents of Harlem, negroes who spent their lives doing menial tasks—houseboys, liftboys, variety artists, valets, cooks, parlourmaids, lavatory attendants—revel unhindered at the Savoy, letting off their individual steam.

Have you ever seen the last death-throe gyrations of a cat that has been run over? The frantic twitching of muscle and nerve are too unexpected, involved and rapid for one's eyes to follow. So it is with these Lindy Hoppers. One couple dances with such frenzy that a crowd gathers to watch the wild sickening tempo as they vibrate and rattle, tattooing the ground like some unnatural speeding-up of machinery. The boy, a macaroni in dress, has long, seemingly boneless limbs encased in grey check; the girl wears canvas shoes, tweed skirt, jersey and beret. They are not lovers, but they love to dance together. He is the youngest of a family of eight, a grocer's messenger-boy on fifteen dollars a week. She is an assistant in an "Anti-Kink Parlour", so they can afford to dance most evenings. Without crossing the floor they dance faster and faster, their arms waving,

their hands flicking to a different rhythm from their pattering, rubber-soled shoes, legs like pistons stabbing in perfect mechanical co-ordination. White smiles are flashed as part of the dance, expressing no more than an abstract emotion. The crowd thickens as the abandon grows wilder still. Crescendo, and a new rhythm. The boy makes the girl a human boomerang as the crowd yells its pleasure and joins in the jungle rites.

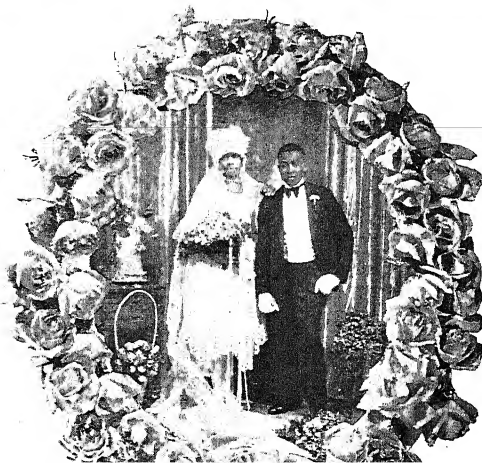
XIX

Negro newspapers place emphasis on Harlem activities. Advertisements praise beauty-creams for bleaching the skin; one caption, accompanied by a photograph of a dark lady emerging from the trumpet of a lily, reads: "The Lily is pretty because it is so fair. Use Black and White Bleaching Cream." The negroes have their own Walter Winchell. . . . "The Leopold McFarlanes are expecting their fourth bundle from Heaven about the middle of June", and the society columns are like any others—"A Gypsy Tea was given by the Polly Perts"—"The Royal Busy Bees gave an initial Tea to-day". The social spotlight of the week is flashed on the executive ladies, and Mrs. Maria Fatchit was "surprised" on her birthday anniversary with a party planned by Stephen Pinks. Mrs. Fatchit was the recipient of many useful gifts, and among those present were: Mr. and Mrs. Sherrit Lattimore, Mr. and Mrs. Eustace Augustine, Miss Willie Mae Elmore, Miss Sadie Noisette, Mrs. Bernia Worthy, Mrs. Anzoria Hanna, Bubbles of the Dancing Team "Buck and Bubbles", Mr. Ben Beaubian and Mrs. Zenaide Jureidini.

Social divisions among the negroes are no different from those among the white people. At the top of the social scale are the old and established negro families, conservative and respectable, whose doings are not too well known because, like real white society, they avoid the news. Their children go to Harvard, many of them vote Republican, and their income generally comes from among the negro people themselves. Below them are the "café society" negroes, who include the writers, composers, musicians, dancers and artists, labour and political leaders.

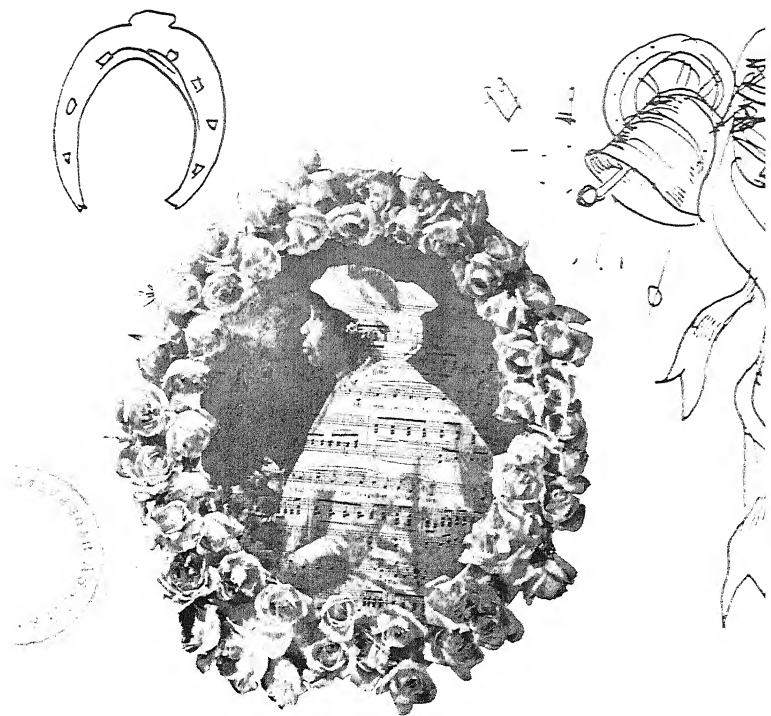
There is freedom and dignity and intelligence behind much of the coloured press, and its liberal friends are continuing the fight with as much fervour as ever. There are negroes in Congress, and





Mr

& Mrs



Oh promise me...





CLINIC QUEUE

HARLEM

FINAL TOUCHES FOR WOOING



STREET FISHING

GUM THE BAIT

PENNIES THE CATCH



Labour organizers such as A. Philip Randolph are working well for the good of their people.

XX

Since the war, the American negro has become militantly political. For a while it seemed as if the larger issue of the war itself would eclipse his struggle for his rights, but discrimination in the army stirred strong resentment among both white and negro groups, and with the post-war period so full of discussion of minority groups, the question of the Indian people, the Palestinian Jews, the minority groups in Africa, the American negro may well believe that now is the time to intensify the struggle for that equality for which he has fought for so long.

The 'twenties gave Harlem its reputation. But the fabulous Madame Walker, who made a million on her hair de-kinking process, is dead. Carl Van Vechten's "nigger Heaven" exists no longer. The large coloured night-clubs, to which the negroes were never welcomed, have moved downtown to Broadway. The financial depression ruined the smaller boîtes. Paris claimed the torch-singers. The honky-tonks, the bootleggers and the Blackbirds have scattered, and the waiters spin trays no more. The extravagances of Lanky "Keed" Chocolate and the rhetorical magnificence of the fanatic Marcus Garvey are dim memories. Garvey died in obscurity in London, shortly before World War II, and his dream of a black empire was never to be realized. In his wake came the missionary Father Divine, the light of the 'thirties which is still glimmering. Divine's followers adopt heavenly names, "Sincere Love" or "Faith Supreme", but their Father has no apostles, and has worked no manifest miracles. There is no crystallized dogma to preach, and with his death the movement will die with him.

Back on Park Avenue, the clubman's attitude to the "damn' niggers" is that he doesn't care so long as they don't come downtown. "What the hell! They're O.K. in Harlem—they *like* it up there anyway." To him they are "all right in their place", and by that he means they may dance jazz to people who are drinking, or serve drinks to people who are dancing. The negro is looked upon as a servant, a sort of "Brave New World" Epsilon type, who occasionally rapes a white girl and has to be punished.

"Of course," you hear some women chatter, "I *like* niggers. I know several and they're just as nice and *cosy* . . ." "But," they add hastily, "of course they have to be kept in their place. Only people who've lived over here, naturally, can appreciate that."

Meanwhile, the negroes who *like* Harlem, live there not by choice but by necessity, and pay higher rent and food prices than other New Yorkers. In Harlem, four times as many negroes die from tuberculosis as do the total victims from all the rest of the city combined. There are twice as many cancer and accident deaths than New York City has outside that district; seven times the city's totality of syphilis. The lack of hospital and clinical facilities in Harlem is deplorable.

VII

THE ENTERTAINMENT WORLD AND THE CULTURAL SCENE

I

IN New York, the art of entertainment has been raised to the height of a great national activity. The theatre is part of contemporary existence, with eight and a half million people attending yearly. But the New York theatre is more of a show business than a serious art form. With great resources of talent to draw upon, for stars from all over the world come to make the actors' constellation shine brighter, most American playwrights succeed only in creating a slick commercial product, and the vagaries of production, the commercialism of the producers themselves, including the inevitable nod to Hollywood, which often buys hit plays for fantastic sums, tend to discourage the productions of the experimental, intelligent theatre.

The New Yorker takes the cinema less seriously than he does the theatre. Going to a movie for him is much like taking a lucky dip; one film may be as dreary as another. Of late, Hollywood has come in for some serious criticism, and economic circumstances in Europe are helping to break up some of its monopolistic methods. Perhaps this will lead to a higher level of American cinema. In England the movies are seriously considered as art form and have sadly damaged the theatre.

In London the dramatic critics live in a world apart. Their opinions, often as remote as they are dry, are unheeded except by those directly concerned with the theatre. New York critics are a vital factor in current tendencies, and although they manage to knife the most objectionable rubbish, a respectable corpse will sometimes be found in the morgue of theatrical flops. In London one asks the opinion of a friend about a certain play; in New York theatregoers must read Mr. Brooks Atkinson or Mr. Howard Barnes.

New York audiences are on the whole critical and alert, with a highly developed sense of the ridiculous. They are ruthless; old favourites are discarded as soon as they fail to please. New York audiences will not accept anything hackneyed. London managers,

knowing how much the audience dislikes anything it has not seen before, consider one success as a pattern for future offerings. One success does not often lead to another in New York, and a playwright who has written a hit one season, may well have a flop the next, especially if he follows the pattern he used for his first play.

The vital and interesting days of the Group Theatre and Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre are past: the Group Theatre dissolved after a noteworthy period of struggle; and the fine early talent of Mr. Welles has been distorted and watered down by his Hollywood career and his exhibitionistic flare. The Theatre Guild presents too many revivals, and the new playwrights are cut from a commercial pattern; only a few producers have real merit, but as Mr. George Bernard Shaw once said, "The theatre is *always* at a low ebb."

In all New York the tempo is quick. In the theatre it is breathless. Playwrights must continually be "whipping it up" to satisfy audiences. Chekhov's subtle and slow-moving masterpieces often prove boring to a New York audience. Although Broadway actors lack "background", thereby offering only limited types, they begin their careers early, and often without the hindrance of a dramatic school training, which, accompanied as it is in England by a clipped accent, exaggerated vowel sounds and other essays in gentility, is an advantage. Few Broadway actors have either the physical or vocal grace for Shakespeare or Rostand, but they are not as the actors in Shaftesbury Avenue, trying above all to be "gentlemen" and most are consummately witty in a naturalistic vein.

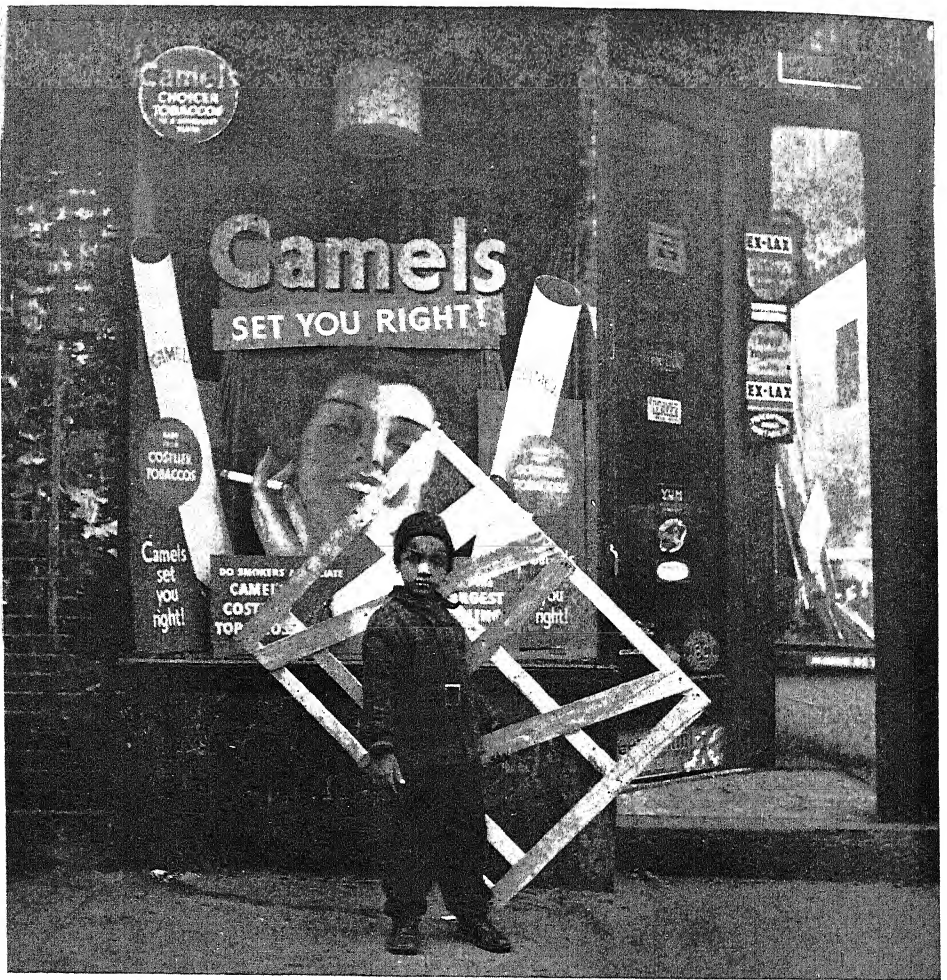
Americans, when they visit London, may be appalled by certain aspects of the West End theatre, with its countless musical revivals, polite comedies and warhorse stars battling in the french-windowed drawing-rooms to infuse life into their performances by means of pointing index fingers, flipped handkerchiefs, winks and grimaces. Yet New York, always hospitable to foreign stars since the days of Bernhardt, Rejane and Duse, now welcomes English stars as first favourites.

Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Irving Berlin, Herbert and Dorothy Fields, and, more recently, Adolph Green and Betty Comden, are among the chief contributors to the musical comedy theatre which possesses a brashness and a vigour which is very winning.



王
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PICCANINNY

Outstanding stage memories of the last few years have been Miss Laurette Taylor's shining and great performance in *The Glass Ménagerie*: Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in whatever they do. Miss Fontanne, with proud head and proffered profile, enters the stage, defying anyone not to admit that she is a beautiful woman, yet only by acquiring the behaviour of a beauty has she become one. Miss Ina Claire, brilliant even without a vehicle, is the wittiest and most dazzling actress. Miss Helen Hayes adds brilliance of technique to a natural instinct, and has also added to her stature by proving that she can be a very fine comedienne. Miss Katherine Cornell has the essential quality of dominating the stage, even when sitting in a corner of it. Of the actors, there are few to compare with the five or ten brilliant actresses. George M. Cohan, once the most loved figure on the New York stage, is dead. Apart from Alfred Lunt, it would be hard to find a male actor between thirty and forty years of age who could be compared to Sir Laurence Olivier in England, Jean-Louis Barrault in France.

Among the playwrights, Eugene O'Neill, by sledge-hammer methods, maintains his leading position on the New York stage: George Kelly is not an artist in the true sense of the word, but his naïvely constructed plays are always fascinating for their human insights and moral probings.

Lillian Hellman is heavily social, and has been acclaimed for writing melodramatic and "well-made" plays. At her best she has a solid and isolated concentration. The established playwrights, Maxwell Anderson, Elmer Rice and Clifford Odets still turn out the hits, but they cannot be considered serious figures of the highest quality. It is curious that America, which has a distinct literature of its own, with definite artists in the field of the novel and of poetry should not have attained a nobler standard of theatre. Perhaps this is because the drama, more than the other arts, is peculiarly susceptible to the wooing of commercialism, which almost entirely obviates a serious dramatic art.

There are a number of fine directors, including several off-shoots of the now defunct Group Theatre. Mr. George Kaufman, a master of comedy, has a superficial and unpretentious brilliance. His gifts are often employed on rewriting and redirecting and he is likely to have a hand, and a percentage of the profits, in many of each season's

successes. George Abbott is also noted for his comedy abilities, but he never seems able to employ his talents in connection with any finer theme than *Boy meets Girl*. Jed Harris's early brilliance seems to have petered out; Herman Shumlin is a literal, heavy, but often effective, director mostly of social dramas. Mr. Eddie Dowling occasionally has an interesting touch, group "atmosphere" plays being his *forte*.

II

In the cinema theatre of New York, the architect's aim seems to have been to create a building to disguise its real function. We sit watching Miss Barbara Stanwyck inciting her lovers to murder, or Miss Bette Davis preparing to shoot somebody, from seats set in an Italian vineyard of illuminated grapes, a rococo terrace under a starry Venetian sky or a dimly lit loggia filled with artificial flowers and marble statues. Outside, under the portico of massed electric bulbs, the ticket-taker yawns in her booth.

Radio City Music Hall is an exception, for it is designed with a striking simplicity. Lighting from slats in the endless perspective of golden arches provides the sole decoration of the vast auditorium. Through these venetian blinds rainbows of blue-green appear. We sit in a blue-green world, conscious of the Enormity of the purple curtain which, as we watch, changes to blazing vermilion. The proscenium arch is so high that the curtain seems to unfold itself in slow motion. We watch as from an aeroplane, remote, quite unattached and with no affinity with the dwarfed beings so far away on the stage. Simultaneously the rainbows change to crimson, steeping us in the rosy glow of the photographic dark-room. Again the lights change, and the great floor show once more provides one of Broadway's unfailing successes. The musical numbers and ballets by the "Rockettes" are nearly always of a higher grade of imagination than the lavish paucity of the Hollywood musical films that they may precede. The Rockettes, fifty amazingly trained dancers, the coloured lights turning them into luminous Japanese lanterns, dance with a precision that would delight a Prussian general. The *dénouement* of their routine is invariably a high-kicking goose-step that automatically produces thunderous volumes of applause. Looked at from a distance, these dancers seem like an animated comb or a centipede sensible to rhythm.

New York has a number of small movie-houses devoted almost exclusively to foreign films: the Apollo, the Little Carnegie, the World, the Ambassador, the Thalia and others, continually feature French, Italian, Russian and English films.

The Translux Cinemas are easily distinguishable by their chromium modernesque façades and block neon lettering. Inside, the extreme brilliance of the projector, placed behind instead of before the screen, creates a glow so bright that one can easily find one's seat, read a newspaper or, for an hour, watch the programme of standard reels of news-cartoons and actualities.

III

Sports are always popular with Americans, and pages of the newspapers are devoted to the doings in baseball, football, hockey, wrestling, prize-fighting and horse-racing. Though most New Yorkers play the role of spectators at these sports, a great many indulge in the less strenuous roller-skating, bowling and billiards.

Madison Square Garden, originally started by Mr. Barnum, now attracts millions yearly for boxing, hockey, roller derbys, circus wrestling, rodeo, horse, dog, cat, poultry and police shows, and tennis or basket-ball matches.

The terrible days of dance marathons, "gabfests" and pole-sitting belong now to the era of Texas Guinan, Mayor Jimmy Walker and Aimée Semple McPherson's Hot Gospellers.

Thousands of enthusiasts are attracted into the smoky, foggy atmosphere around the brilliantly lit arena to watch the wrestling. Women, with their husbands, or in twos and threes, take off fur coats and fold their hands preparatory to the enjoyment of a cosy evening. The men are eager-eyed, chewing with restless energy.

The preliminary fights are treated as a "till ready" for the major operations. The audience is not yet particularly interested in what happens to which opponent. Celebrities in the ringside seats are pointed out. The referee, now a dentist in Nyack, was once a wrestler himself. So, obviously, was the man next to him, with his face battered flat as a rock.

The referee sounds his bell, a bell that hurts the temples. The preliminary antagonists bait one another, now getting into a clinch, unable to get out of it until one makes a mistake, such a mistake

that defeat would surely be preferable to such humiliation. The crowd, high at the back of the hall, begins to whistle, to make isolated calls. "Attaboy Jim, twist it"—"it" meaning the head of the man who made the mistake. Someone boos.

"It's brutal to match guys like that," one hears in an aside.

"No, not brutal, funny."

But the fight does not stir the crowd. "Throw the bum out" . . . "Which one do you mean?" Sarcasm is barbed, ribaldry cruel, and the epithets almost poetical. The referee's tin bell clangs; the fight, amidst general boos, is declared a draw.

Two more victims appear, blinking under the strong lights. Again the flat bell, and another slow slaughter begins. The protagonists duck, crouch, duck again. Heads down, arms outstretched, they cling to one another, ramming with their heads, like bulls.

Just a minor discomfort in this sport is the frequent pushing against, or dragging along, the ropes, burning into the wrestler's naked flesh, leaving ugly weals.

One of the bulls had in some other bout been badly burned and scarred. For to-night's rites it has been thought wise to fix a small bandage to the worst wound, on the ribs. Once seen the rectangle of plaster cannot be ignored, must be followed through the intricacies of the fight. A twist has dragged one of the sticking tapes out of place, a throw against the ropes has loosened another strip. By horrifying, slow degrees, the pad of liniment and cotton wool is torn away, to fall stickily into the ring.

Inevitably, the dislodged bandage is stepped upon, the adhesive tape clings to the ball of the foot, as difficult to remove as flypaper. Not until after the scissor hold, when it finds a new home on the thigh of the underdog, at the ring of the flat bell and the booing of the mob, is the fight of the bandage over.

To keep the crowd's sympathy, a wrestler should not appeal to the referee, even against unfair treatment. To wrench a smile, to tickle the opponent successfully, will create a good impression. Pulling the hair is about the only indignity not encouraged. Many wrestlers, however, ignore the reactions of the crowd, remaining impervious to its shouts of encouragement, hostility or derision.

The bouts continue, and those in the crowd compete in witticisms. The man in the brown suit, smoking a cigar, is the knowing type:

"Look, he's on the soft part of the biceps, just like he wanted." Stark agony is registered on the wrestler's face, like an early Christian martyr's ecstasy. Why does he do it, if he hates it so? "Look at that face now!" . . . "He's got a leverage now, he's getting busy". . . . "Bite his leg!" . . . "There's a picture!" . . . "Break it off!" . . . "Wake me when it's over!" "Come on, pizon."

Someone whistles, blows a series of catcalls. A siren shrills, and another match is over. The Spanish Bull victorious over the Giant Polish Bull.

Now the evening's big fight begins. The "Greek Adonis" is pitted against a gorilla with one eye, a bullet head and a body weighing two hundred and forty pounds. The bell clangs as if for vespers, and they set to. Ten minutes of such activity would leave the average man dead, but one torture follows another, and for forty minutes power and endurance are tested to the extreme.

As the bodies bounce off the ropes and fall in heavy somersaults to the boards, the whole ring shakes. The agony of the short arm-lock is followed by the systematic squeezing of the kidneys. Like a whimpering child's the gorilla's face is puckered with pain, his huge arms in the air, beseeching, trembling.

"This is a pure example of power—when that happens, everything turns delightfully black."

With fingers crossed, the knuckles are forced into the forehead, and the gorilla writhes, yearning for the oasis of the ropes. The referee runs in circles, kicking him away from his goal. Eventually, by sheer force, the grip is broken. The Greek has misjudged and, before he knows it, finds himself with both hands tied under one leg. The other leg is tied back and he becomes a human parcel.

"Send it through the mail!" . . . "Embroider him!" . . . "Cute smile, hasn't he?" . . . "Look, Dolly, when the perspiration starts you know it's hurting!" Sweat pours from his back. His hands become so slippery that at last he is able to free himself. In a flash his knowledge of reflex actions has enabled him to find a death grip.

From the audience, the gorilla's infuriated wife boos her husband's opponent. The crowd, in unison, mimics the mammalian grunts and roars of pain.

"Is that his glass eye or did somebody throw a grape?" . . . "Nice work—he knows the vital spots!" . . . "The whole thing's a bit

naïve, isn't it?" . . . "Can't you take a joke? He doesn't mean it—he's saving himself for to-morrow night!"

The neck is almost broken; the legs are wrenched apart; the arm is about to leave its socket.

"Here's a good one, it's going to be a full nelson!" Catapulted from the ropes, the Greek leaps into the air, feet foremost, striking his opponent's chest with tremendous force. Before the gorilla finds his wind again the trick has been repeated, but this is to be no hat-trick: the Greek meets his waterloo with the third flying leap, for the gorilla, inexplicably, avoids the attack. The boards crack under the stunning fall. With the Adonis' head irretrievably locked between his thighs, the gorilla bounces, wreaking irrevocable damage, on the boards, like a baby on a sofa. "The flying-mare follows."

Some time passes before the Greek is conscious again. Amidst a Bedlam of noise, the gorilla, in purple dressing-gown, raises his arms victoriously. When after two hours of such intense and compelling entertainment one's nervous excitement has cooled, one wonders how these things could be; especially how could anyone voluntarily make a profession of submitting to such outrages. Yet one's own concentration made it easy to realize that there are elements in this exhibition that, whether we suspect it or not, appeal to all of us. As the shock of the first few moments looses its force, unorthodox behaviour becomes orthodox, and barbarism is logical. It is not so surprising that wrestling is the fourth biggest industry in the country.

IV

On another evening, between twelve and fifteen thousand people are assembled at Madison Square Garden for the most popular winter sport—basket ball. Coaches spy around the streets and playgrounds of the local schools to discover boys of promise who are then invited to become members of various colleges in order that when they are eighteen years old they may aspire to perform (as this evening) on the brilliantly lit rectangle of yellow ochre polished wood which is marked with the regulation lines in scarlet and blue. Manhattan, in emerald green, has just beaten St. John's, in scarlet. Now the teams of to-night's big match—Fordham and New York University—stream in, in violet and maroon respectively. The atmosphere is that of a circus, with the rival college bands in

four corners of the arena, blaring intrepidly, one against the other. Vendors of peanuts and "ice-cold drinks" plug their wares and add to the accumulation of noise. Two boys rush out on to the floor, throw themselves into a series of strange, rhythmic gestures, crouching, leaping into the air and conclude with a wild clapping of their hands while their legs shoot high. They are the cheer-leaders, and could put a Zulu warrior to shame. Bands play the *Star Spangled Banner*; everyone stands to attention; then a witty neighbour, settling down to the main attraction of the evening, says, "That song will make the hit parade yet—"

The coaches are giving their respective groups a final team-talk. The boys cluster in a circle, solid masses of violet and maroon. Now the Catholic team, on their knees, are saying their "Hail, Marys" and their final prayer. They cross themselves and run into the arena. The game starts, and at first it is impossible fully to appreciate the dexterity and strategy of the players. No wasted movement. The ball is disposed of with the most consummate ease. A pivot on one foot, and the runner is suddenly sallying in an unexpected direction. Number 26, a blond with an abnormal adam's apple, is particularly spectacular, but in this game ninety per cent depends on team work. A certain lurch, move or thrust produces yells of excited screeches from the audience. Water is brought in on a tray of paper containers, or ladled from a bucket. A face-towel is shared by each team, but the physical condition and stamina of the players are unimpaired, and the game continues. The audience is delighted by the antics of the umpire as he grimaces, leaps into the air, and doubles his fists. Not one detail of the game escapes his eagle eye, as he yells and gesticulates and proclaims another foul. Underneath the arms, his grey shirt is gradually becoming black; by the end of the game the entire shirt is sopping. In the far corner another cheer-leader is at work, his legs shooting in and out like a toy monkey on a string. The score is creeping up to produce a zenith of excitement. The ball is manoeuvred super-expertly. Each player has another designated to oppose him. The enemy runs at the man with the ball, flaps his arms like a wounded crow and lurches forward with a defeatist "hands up" to overpower his prey.

Two gum-chewing girls in the audience strain forward with pop-eyed interest. "Jeepers, you have to have one of those holy medals

around your neck to get away with that." . . . "Now you see why the kids wear knee pads."

The score is 36—35, with only one and three-quarter minutes to play. The spectacular Number 26 has got hurt; his ankle has turned over, and while he lies on the ground, surrounded by ministrants, the tireless photographers are on the spot. Poor Adam's Apple is lifted to his seat, where, in an agony of pain and an agony of excitement for his team, he beats the air and leaps to his feet, to be sent back by an acute stab of torture from the ankle that, to-morrow morning, will be as swollen as the object of his excitement—the basket ball.

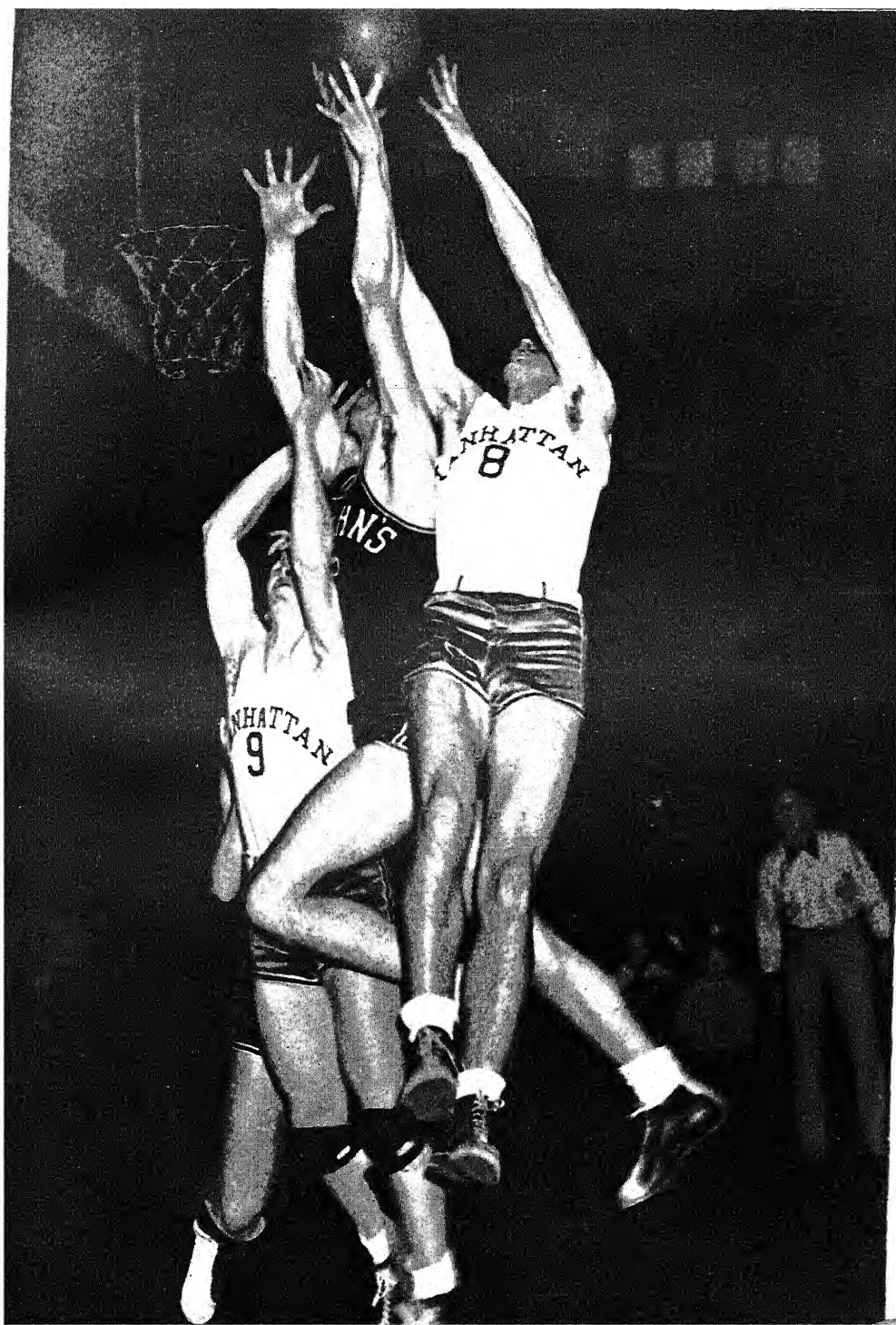
"Look, they're trying to 'freeze' the ball," screams one of the gum-chewing girls. (The violets are trying to keep possession of the ball for the remaining few seconds of time.) But the maroons have managed to outwit this strategy, and the entire Garden yells at the lightning dribble and the thrust of the ball into the air that lands slick through the net basket. The bandsmen go mad, jumping into the air, waving instruments as if electrified. The trombone player's leap has more *élan* than Nijinsky's. The twelve to fifteen thousand people unanimously rise screaming to their feet, turn for their belongings and troop out in slow procession down the iron staircase, along the circling corridors hung with the photographs of long-forgotten prize fighters and other physical marvels of the past, while the morrow's attractions are proclaimed through a megaphone.

V

Probably no city sees more dancing than New York. Three major ballet companies are performing simultaneously, every musical comedy and major movie house boasts a ballet and an indefinable number of small groups and soloists give recitals every night in the week throughout the year.

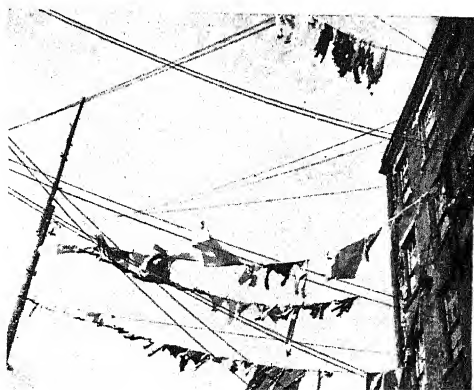
Despite this activity, very few great ballets have seen the light. Among the choreographers, Mr. George Balanchine's devotion and inventiveness stand like a monument in an otherwise battered field. Alone in contemporary choreography as one who truly discovers new forms, new patterns, new movements, he has been much attacked, but his influence is enormous.

The talented negro dancer, Katherine Dunham, is an authority





everyday
Bunting.



on the dances, past and present, of Africa, the West Indies and South America. Her dance school produces some fine Negro talent in that field of dancing which is properly in their tradition.

VI

New York's intellectual and cultural life has changed considerably since the late 'twenties and early 'thirties. In the earlier period of great ferment and experiment, the emphasis was on innovation. To-day "Modernism" has won important battles and we find in New York a period of "intensification", both as to production of new works and in critical response to these works. In New York to-day we can see the finest contemporary art. One can see the canvases of Pavel Tchelitchev and his attempts to create a new humanistic cosmos, with his superb sub-cutaneous, anatomic art. His colours glow through transparencies of paint contrived with skill and poetry to express such curious conceptions of the human body. Bérard, Leonor Fini, Jean Hugo, Eugene Berman, Hayter, Max Ernst, Dorothea Tanning, Leon Kelley, Arshile Gorki, Leonid, and the Belgian surrealist, Paul Delvaux, with his breast-bared women nurturing their melancholia; Petrov (an American discovery from Philadelphia) and the creator of poetic "objects", Joseph Cornell, are among the painters exhibiting during the winter months.

Kurt Seligman, the specialist of the occult, exhibits his skeletonic figures, rehearsing with a contemporary freshness the ancient myths. The hot, angle-filled surrealist landscapes of Esteban Frances, have the lovely coloured interiors of kaleidoscopes.

Matta's sadistic visions; Tanguy's horizons, now moved forward as his delicate forms come closer to our eyes; Chagall's innocent celebrations of marriage and love; Miro's newest crisp lithographs and gouaches; the latest drawings of the elder Matisse, and the newest paintings of many artists from Paris are all to be seen on 57th Street.

New Yorkers buy several millions of dollars worth of art each year, good, bad and indifferent. Apparently the influx of European refugees from the war helped to create a finer taste, while the presence in America of so many distinguished artists, writers and intellectuals has left its mark.

A record of this heightened taste can be observed in the pages of

the avant-garde quarterly *View*, edited with taste by the poets Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler.

VII

In winter there is almost too much good music. The concert halls are plastered with announcements of concerts and recitals; Sunday papers herald a phenomenal list of musical activity. Foreign pianists, conductors and singers are continually arriving and departing.

The symphony concerts are of the highest quality in the world, and Toscanini has as much fame as a cinema star and more power than most politicians. New York audiences are the most enthusiastic and critical in the world. Although Toscanini is treated almost as a deity the audience has been known to hiss when his performance has not maintained its usual standard.

It is no longer surprising in New York to find "standing room only" signs for the concerts of Maggie Teyte, Wanda Landowska, Ralph Kirkpatrick, Alexander Schneider and Sylvia Marlowe, even though their concerts are made up of the most difficult and "in-accessible" works of the older composers.

The young Leonard Bernstein conducts with much *élan* the *Oedipus Rex* of Stravinski, new works by Milhaud, Bartók and Hindemith. The duo-pianists Robert Fizdale and Arthur Gold provide complete concerts of newly commissioned works by Haieff, Bowles and Honegger. Lou Harrison has conducted the neglected Americans, Ruggles and Ives. In the past few seasons the incredible innovator John Cage has come forward with his "prepared pianos" (pianos whose sounds are changed by placing screws, pennies, bits of wool and wood, or rubber bands in the strings). Romolo di Spirito and Carrington Welch have presented their recitals of new songs by Poulenc, Rieti, Messaien and Copland.

It is curious that New York, so proud of its musical achievements, should have no hall or theatre worthy of them or of so great a city. Carnegie Hall reminds one of the recreation-room at a Spa Hotel, and a small town in Italy produces a more opulent opera-house than the Metropolitan, an antiquated store-house or prison without a façade.

Here the highest-paid singers sing their hearts out, and throughout

the season the house is packed; yet the operatic productions are excessively dull. They are a *pot-pourri* of bad vocal standards, over-worked artists, dreadful settings and a tiresome repertoire. It is often impossible to believe that one has not been transplanted back fifty years, while the somnambulistic conductor seems forgotten by the elephantine singers wearing wigs and draperies saved from Patti's day.

When the Metropolitan Opera Company was founded in the 'eighties, certain wealthy people took boxes for the season, in the same way that real estate is owned. These investments have now become the means whereby the great families can enjoy music for its own sake. Some of these boxes have passed from grandfather to grandson, and may be sub-let or sold. There is a great deal of etiquette about the "placement" in the box, and the owner must sit in the front row, at the farthest point from the stage. Unfortunately, some of the boxes remain unused for much of the season, for their owners have not taken the trouble to go to the opera, to sub-let them or to place them at the disposal of their friends.

Not so, however, on the first night of the season, for this event is of great importance. The cars of the opera-goers create an impassable phalanx extending for many blocks around the Metropolitan, and, in addition to the music-lovers there is the social-army cataclysm in its annual mass attack upon music. Warlike conditions prevail in the lobby, where the "Four Thousand" is fighting its way through a mob of journalists and photographers. *Lakmé* has begun when the auditorium is reached, but that is a minor consideration. The real interest lies in watching the boxes in the golden horseshoe filling, one by one. Mrs. Vanderbilt arrives, all white and silver, as if in a cocoon of that spun-sugar around an ice-cream.

When the lights go up in the auditorium for the first interval the Opera Season has really begun.

A pathological restlessness pervades the house. Everyone is searching for someone else. The Louis Sherry lounge is thick with smoke, and the harassed faces are continuously lit by the flash of photographers' bulbs. Groups of old ladies in mustard wigs, marmalade wigs, chutney wigs that cover a web of skin-stitches over the temples, dressed in the palest Neapolitan and *pistachio* ice-cream colours, with orchids tied with tinsel ribbon in the white fox collars

of their ermine capes, and cords of pearls bandaging the drainpipes of their old chickens' necks, seem to have been carefully preserved for this occasion. This must surely be their first appearance since posing for Toulouse-Lautrec. For days the assistants at the beauty salons must have been massaging, enamelling and painting overtime, the coiffeurs dyeing and tonging the heads.

The borderline of insanity is always elusive, but it seems dangerously near to us at this moment.

Below, in the vestibule, a more certifiable madness can be seen. An old lady, once an actress on Broadway, has got herself up in ghastly glad rags, remains of some ancient theatrical wardrobe, yet little worse than those in the assembly above. Nowadays she is not quite sound in the head, and she remonstrates loudly with the doorman who refuses her admittance. She has no ticket, no money, so she cannot pass. She stays, gesticulating in a pantomime of protest, in her yellowing ermine and cracked kid gloves, coal-black eyes glaring from beneath her frizzed hair. "I'll report you to the manager. Do you know who you are talking to?" "Show me yer ticket," he says. And then, "You're cracked."

She is still there, peering through the glass doors like a ruffled bird, as the assembly returns, but the stragglers titter as she gathers her frayed train and foots it to the sanctuary of her bed-sitting room.

The curtain has long gone up on the second act. The photographers' bulbs that were silver Christmas tree decorations have turned to balls of cloudy glass, lying stacked in corners.

Lakmé is sliding down vocal banisters, performing her Bell Song. The conductor directs as much with facial gesture as with baton. One player courteously waits for the E above high C before noisily tipping the water out of his instrument.

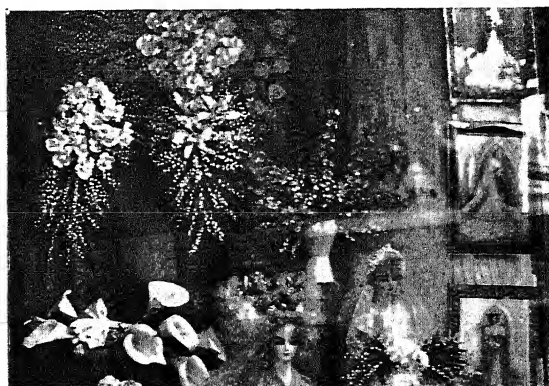
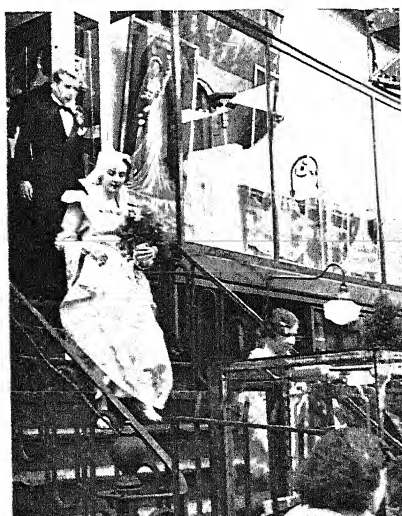
During the performance people come and go like the audience at some continuous film-show. Many who have paid prohibitive prices for the privilege of hearing the opera are propped against the bar, while on the stage *Lakmé* is preparing to eat the poisoned lotus.

The snores of an old man and the asthmatic moth-flutters of the cine-kodaks compete with the clicking of the Leicas of enthusiastic "candid-cameramen", as *Lakmé* fights a desperately losing battle.

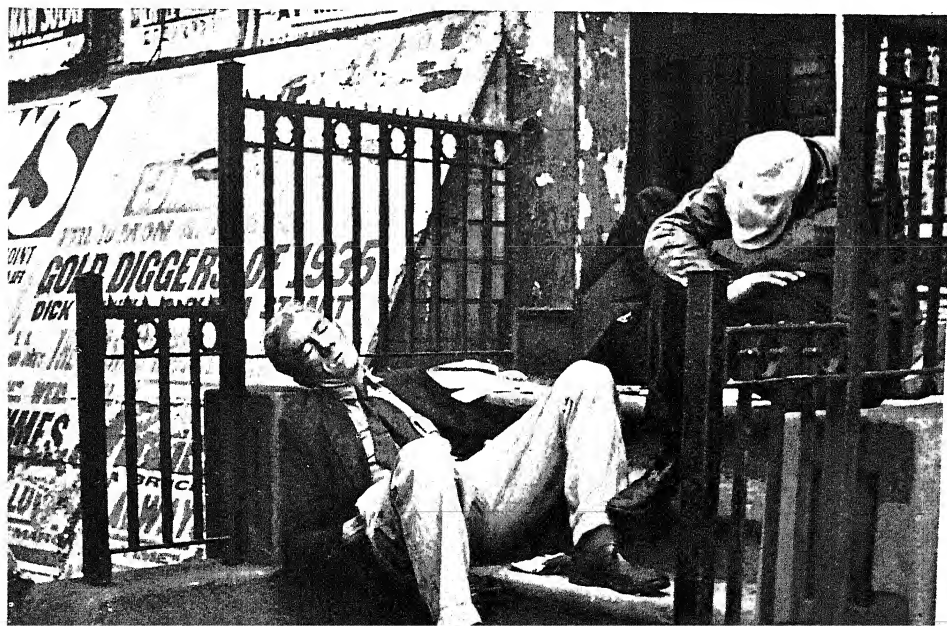
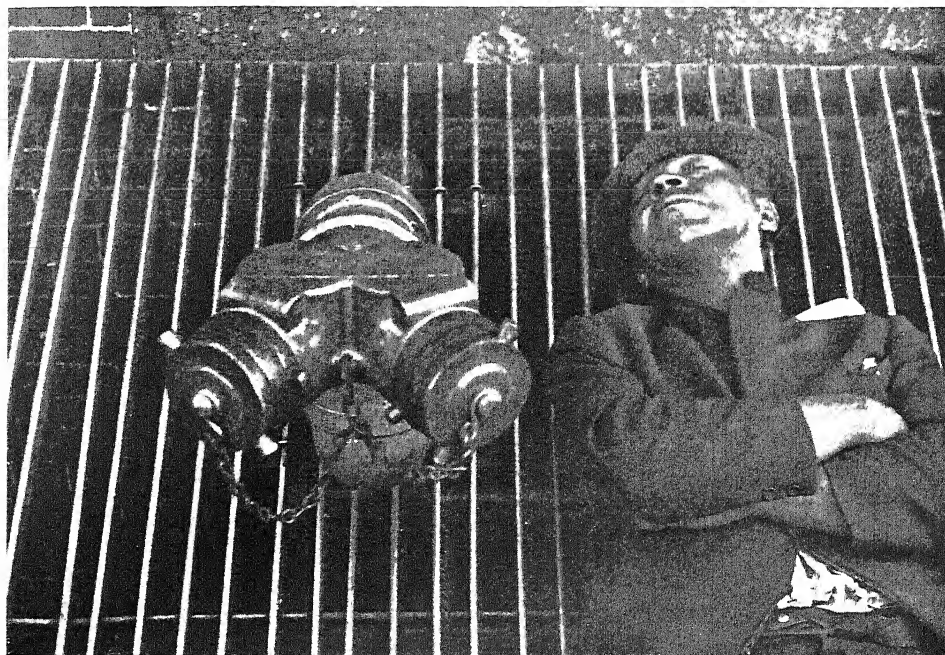
The lights go up again and the gallery applauds the insignificant figures who take their bow.



THE STREET OF THE BRIDES









EVERYTHING A BRIDE COULD DESIRE



Next morning the papers carry front-page stories. The gossip columnists, the voices of society and Broadway, and the radio gossipers, fill pages or radio networks with chattering descriptions of the most glittering golden horseshoe in the history of the Metropolitan.

VIII

With no foundation for its authority, the Social Register has become the only authority nominating aspirants to society. For little apparent reason it may sometimes classify only one member of a large family. There seems to be no accounting for its dictates. Inclusions and omissions are made for inexplicable reasons. This chronicle will spurn a certain lady for years, and like New York society itself, may accept her overnight.

Comparatively few people know about the real New York society, for it refuses to allow its names to make news. These respectable families, tolerant of others though convinced of their own priority, lead traditional lives of "culture" much the same, if perhaps more conscientious, as those of the aristocracy of any other capital. They are in no way especially typical of New York. They do not allow their lives to be arranged by the street. They live in their own houses, have their own possessions, their silver, linen-rooms and cellars. They go to church on Sunday, do charitable work, play bridge, listen to music, give dinner-parties, go to balls and take their valuable paintings with them from their New York homes when they go for the summer to the country. They are punctual, and it is bedtime at the end of the concert. The children very likely speak German as well as French, and unmarried daughters are heavily chaperoned. These people seldom are seen at restaurants, their photographs do not grace the papers. They do not buy their flowers at florists. On the side-table in their libraries will be a basket of tapestry wools and a historical biography.

In New York the young girl "makes an official debut". The Junior League takes her in hand. Miss Cutting arranges her parties, every hour of her day is planned, and her parents and family are completely crowded out in the artificial social rush. Americans love entertaining, and it comes easily to them. An additional *câchet* is added to a party by a fresh European visitor. New arrivals are

at once plunged into a vortex of gaiety. Naturally, this hospitality is not returned here by the visitors, who have no personal *pied-à-terre* of their own; and when their American hosts come to England, they may find the social tempo somewhat slow. English people will not give the same series of parties in their honour, but they will invite them for week-ends to their country houses, and this really means more.

A larger group, consisting of many sets, leads an existence more highly publicized. At the top of the scale are certain people who lead the respectable lives of private individuals but have, either with or without their own consent, become newspaper copy. Their most intimate activities are known to everyone. Café society does not live at home. If husband and wife, who live in night clubs, should happen to be alone at home for dinner, it is to sink into bed with a tray.

IX

In England, the beauty parlour is considered the prerogative of the rich, but in New York any stenographer has her hair attended to regularly.

One parlour provides a series of treatments known as the "Beauty Day", costing from thirty-five to seventy-five or a hundred dollars. This entitles the client to an early morning arrival at the parlour for a "checking up" by the Beauty Clinic's attendant physician. Based on the result of his examination, her meals for the day are planned by the dietician. The client then has a gymnastic "work-out" on a cork floor, followed by relaxation under electrically heated blankets and a good basking in infra-red rays. An hour's massage follows. While lying on a tray of white sand, she is then submitted to ultra-violet rays. In the hydrotherapy department she may be given under-water massage, Scotch pressure-shower, mineral bath, the "extremely popular Pasteurized-milk bath", or, as we learn from the official, "a rub-down by the masseuse with Body-Smooth, which makes the skin like sleek white velvet". The client may now slip into her "individual peignoir" for lunch—vegetable cocktails, fruit hors d'oeuvres and a sliced carrot.

After these preliminaries, the serious business begins. The face is treated to an electro-tonic massage or a "beauty-lift" mask. The

arms and hands have a moulding treatment and a hot-oil manicure. The feet submit to chiropedure; for the hair, there are a "balsam oil permanent" and a coiffure designed to suit the individual. And so to the climax of the day's transformation—a "personality make-up" in a studio where day and night lighting is installed. Wrinkles have been eased, superfluous hairs removed, sagging sinews revitalized—at least for one night.

Some parlours are even more ambitious. The colour of the eyes can be changed by a process of etching on the eyeball. Lips may be tattooed, guaranteeing a permanent glow. Injections of paraffin may fill out unwelcome hollows. Sinister stories are told of the woman who had part of her interior equipment removed to accomplish a slimming of the waistline, and of the operation on a woman's bow-legs which brought eventual amputation instead of glorification.

One parlour specializes in the shelling of the face. This elaborate process entails the discomfort of continuous washing with a strong mineral salt so that, gradually, the skin becomes furrowed, like an old apple, and a smile becomes a painful essay in the grotesque. For six days the old leather tightens and cracks. On the seventh day it falls away to reveal a face as soft and pink as a child's.

VIII

LAST STRETCH

“. . . THAT I may say, and say truly,” Denton wrote, “that if there be any terrestial happinefs to be had by people of all ranks, especially of an inferior rank, it muft certainly be here . . . where besides the sweetnefs of the Air, the Country itself sends forth fuch a fragrant fmel, that it may be perceived at Sea before they can make the Land: where no evil fog or vapour doth no fooner appear, but a North-Weft or Wefterly winde doth immediately diffolve it, and drive it away. . . .

“. . . If there be any terrestial Canaan, ’tis surely here, where the Land floweth with milk and honey. The inhabitants are bleft with peace and plenty. . . . Where a Waggon or Cart gives as good content as a Coach; and a piece of their home-made Cloth, better than the fineft Lawns or richeft Silks: and though their low-roofed houfes may seem to fhut their doors againft pride and luxury, yet how do they stand wide open to let charity in and out, either to affift each other, or relieve a stranger, and the diftance of place from other Nations, doth fecure them from the envious frowns of ill-affected Neighbours, and the troubles which ufually arife thence.”

On Thursday, the 24th June, in 1497, John and Sebastian Cabot arrived at New York, but decided not to land, saying, “This is a fine place to visit, but we wouldn’t live here for the world.” Visitors from Europe, the Orient, Chicago, Kansas City, Houston, Minneapolis and Boston have not been ashamed to plagiarize this remark. Yet, rightly, New Yorkers are proud of their city, so proud of it that they can be tolerant of criticism. As a topic New York is constantly on the lips of its citizens, many of whom have seen it largely constructed before their very eyes. New York is an entire world in itself. Every nationality and every kind of interest is to be found there. It is the great world market of to-day, a centre to which artists, writers and musicians necessarily migrate. It contains the greatest banks, railways, stores, shipping-lines and entertainment. It is the one great world city.

Goethe said:

“Amerika, Du hast es besser
Als unser Kontinent, der alte,
Hast keine verfallenen Schlösser
Und keine Basalte.”

In a manner, New York may be said to be the essential America: acutely conscious of itself as an entity and yet composed, as no other city in the world is composed, of a thousand alien elements. But the capital of every country in the world is something quite apart from the country itself, and this may be said even more of America and New York than of England and London, France and Paris, Italy and Rome. In the United States, each State has its capital and its own tradition, while New York represents the cosmopolitan world which is growing up on the western shores of the Atlantic.

New York contains more people than the other eight great cities of America combined. It is only possible for a percentage of the population to be out of doors at the same time. The idle leave it, the *élite* escape from it.

The cultural civilization of a people is judged by its art. Clemenceau (was it?) said that “the Americans had passed from a state of barbarism to decadence without the customary interim of civilization.” Oscar Wilde said that “the Americans are not uncivilized, as they are often said to be, they are decivilized.” But, judging by its art, civilization here has reached as far as the appreciation of music and painting, the most primitive of the arts.

The expected seldom happens in New York. The cataclysm, the stock market crash or the hurricane is always sudden. Events forestalled seldom occur.

Life is never free and easy in New York. One has too little to do or too much. In no other city must existence be planned so carefully. Not to go out is to be forgotten, but one invitation accepted leads to a dozen more. Rich people go to hospital in order to rest from their usual existence. In winter the poor freeze, in summer they suffer from the heat. In winter the rich asphixiate in heated rooms and in summer they are frozen by air conditioning.

One has the impression of being in much closer contact with everyday events in New York. The daily routine is more easily dispensed with. Everyone is more available and on hand. Everybody seems to

know where and how the other person is spending his day, and without instructions having been left, you are successfully tracked down by the telephone, even in the obscure restaurant that has been chosen for lunch. In Paris, to make a telephone call is an event. Here, telephoning is as easy as breathing. Only for a minute has the man in the straw boater abandoned his Coke, as he drops in the coin, dials, speaks in monosyllabic undertones and is back at the counter while the coin tinkles to its resting-place, and a dying flutter of metal denotes that another telephone call has been made.

In no other country are there so many fans, autograph-hunters, beggars and anonymous letter-writers. In a city made up of such variety of nationalities and men, dangers lurk in everyday activities. It is difficult not to offend someone present when expressing an opinion in public.

The decimal system simplifies money transactions, but, for the stranger, it is difficult to believe that a nickel, though a much larger coin, is worth only half a dime. Money in New York has oddly different values. A gardenia may cost a quarter, but an orchid fifteen dollars. A nickel is charged for a forty-eight mile ride on the subway. Forty cents will buy an excellent lunch at an automat, but, in more expensive restaurants, as much as \$2.50 is charged for a single dish.

New York is, as Baudelaire spoke of Paris, an "unreal city". Humanity runs the spectrum from infra-poor to ultra-rich. Beneath the line of skyscrapers is an American pattern of jumbled paradoxes. Americans are materialistic and idealistic at the same time: F. Scott Fitzgerald understood this, and saw it as the cross on which the American dream was crucified. His novel, *The Great Gatsby*, beneath its deceptively superficial style, touched upon the main undercurrents of American life. Though his novel was of the 'twenties, it seems timeless and fresh to-day. The New Yorkers have big hearts and small souls, they are cruel, yet sentimental; they are superficial, yet often profound; they are children, but they can be adults as well. The European has a background of hundreds of years, a solid tradition. The American tradition is young, and yet the swift rise of American capitalism has pole-vaulted the people over whole areas of mind and spirit which there was no time to explore. If they are intimate they are intimate with all and sundry, if they

are shy they are universally shy, with their wife, friends and strangers alike. They have no relative qualities of behaviour. The result is a bizarre *collage* of a people. Money is their standard of success, and the soul gets lost in the shuffle. Yet the "brave new world" ideality of their forefathers is inherent in the lifeblood of America, and their ambiguous symbol is a dollar bill in one hand and a dream in the other. New Yorkers use the dream to obtain the dollar-bill, and the dollar-bill to buy the dream, but at the cross-roads of the dream and the dollar stands Radio City as the temple to Apollo. The skyscraper is the concrete fusion of the American ideal which would pierce the rainbow, and the materialistic capitalism which immured that ideal forever within the atoms of steel and stone. It is inevitable that this country produces devils and saints from the same crucible: the ideal is a two-way catalytic agent.

Hart Crane, the tragic American poet, and last of the Faustian Romantics, selected the Brooklyn Bridge as a symbol for his long poem on America. The bridge was to be the symbol of modern man's continuum, spanning time and space. It was "the harp and altar of the fury fused". The subway was a vast umbilical cord, shuttling him through the historical womb of America. That his poem was ultimately a failure indicates that the Brooklyn Bridge could not stand the strain of holding both dream and reality, for the reality has corrupted the dream, and the dream has undermined the reality. The American, passionately involved in his attempts to make this double meaning single, is acutely aware of his failure.

It is night once more in New York. The straight avenues of light end at the sky, pursuing some ultimately significant horizon. The stars are shining above the city, like an old-fashioned pin-prick view with a candle behind it. Every skyscraper is a constellation, each building a solar system of lights. Radio City stands silent and unlit, a chill wind sweeps through the Promenade. Swift traffic moves up and down Park Avenue. Restaurant garbage cans are full of uneaten dinner food, no economies. "Waste not, want not" is never heard. Never a "clean up your plate".

There is friendliness, hospitality and courageous cheerfulness among the citizens. They know that the city in itself is so soulless and cruel. A friend is sick into an apartment-house courtyard sixteen

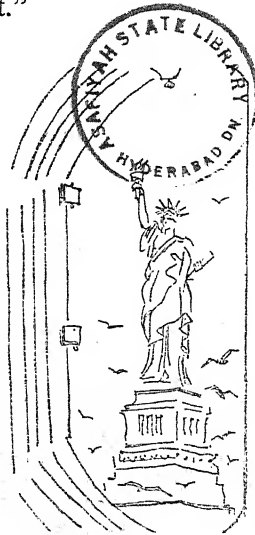
stories below. A voice comes up in reproof: "Say, Buddy, will you *try* and keep it upstairs?"

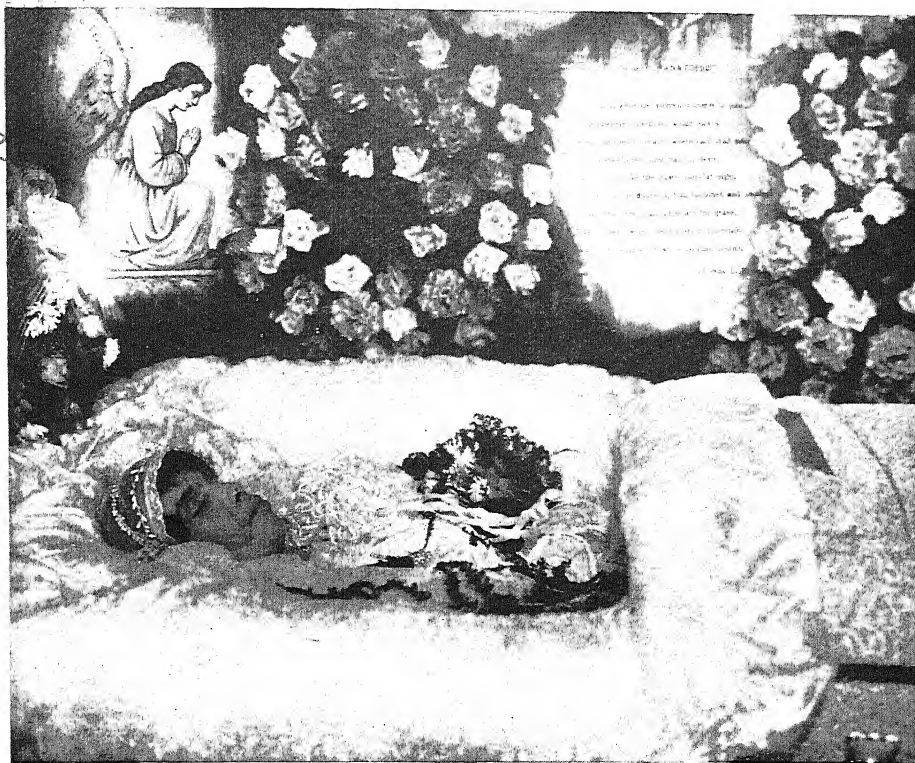
On Broadway, the lights flash: Pepsi-Cola, Four Roses. The faces on the sidewalk are empty, striving, seeing nothing. A drunken sailor staggers out of a Third Avenue bar and down the street, weaving uncertainly. In the 1—2—3 Club the customers drink and talk quietly: the piano makes a background accompaniment, September Song.

The dancers are dancing at the Savoy Ballroom, at the Roseland. Fifty beautiful girls, fifty. Brooklyn passengers rock gently with the subway as it speeds them home. "Goodnight, Al" . . . "Listen, schtunk, give me a call to-morrow, will you?"

The young boy who came to New York to be an actor is having his one daily meal at the Automat. It's all he can afford—fifteen cents for fish-cakes, rolls and coffee. He always eats late, because maybe by wandering around, he'll find some left-over cherry pie. "To-morrow I'll get *Actor's Cue*, and see what's in it. And I've been saving those *New Yorkers*: I can get two cents a piece for them . . ."

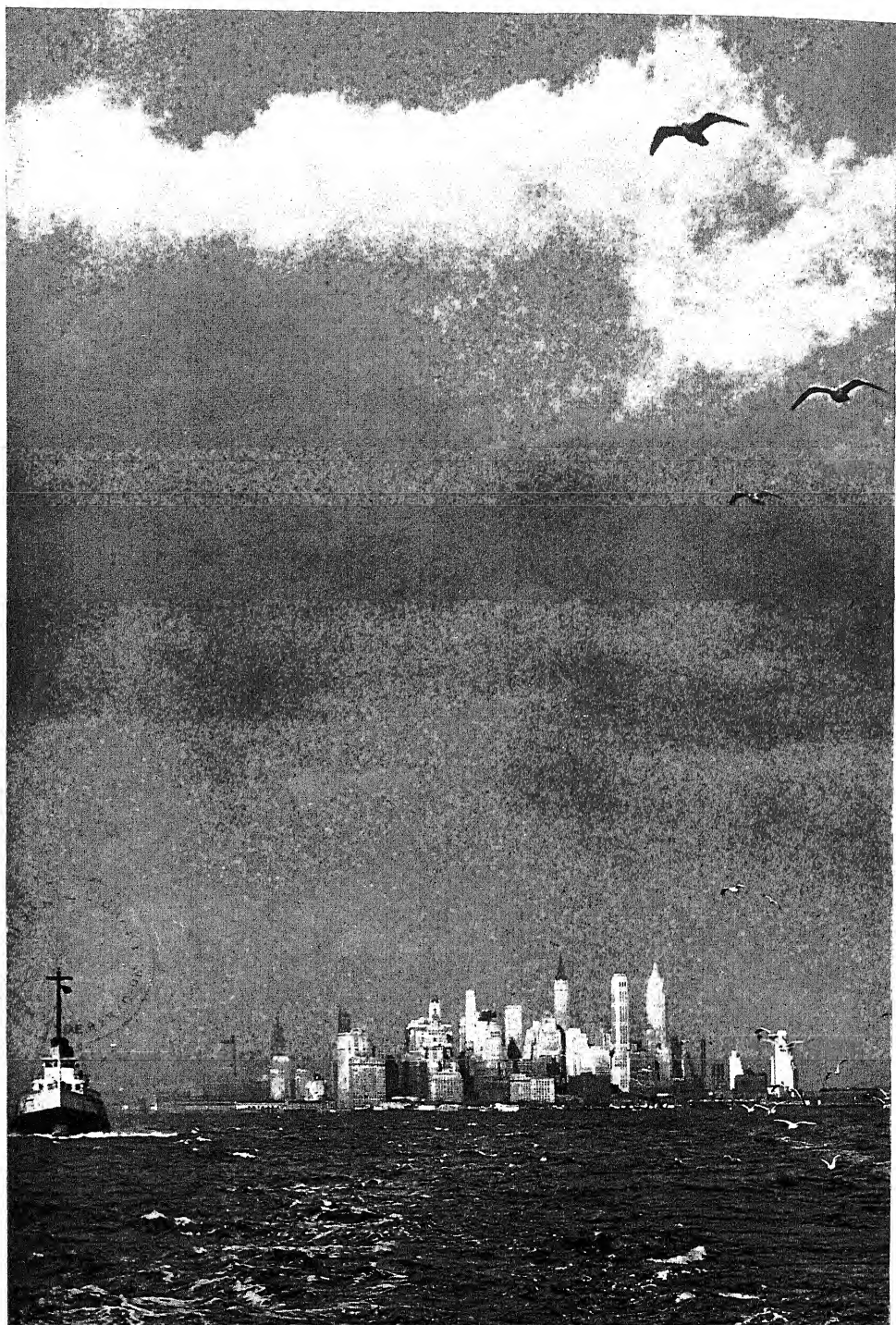
"Meet you at Tony's, at Armando's, at the 400, at the Astor. . . . Taxi! . . . Sorry, no more drinks. It's after closing. . . . Good night ladies. . . . Good night."





DEATH IN HARLEM





INDEX

- Advertising, 55, 56, 80
- Algonquins, 79
- Algonquin Hotel, 35
- Ambassador Hotel, 35
- Antique shops, 39, 94, 95
- Aquarium, the, 73, 74
- Arcades, amusement, 6, 81
- Archipengo, 93
- Architecture, 7, 8, 9, 10, 64, 73, 76, 79, 83, 99
- Area, N.Y.C., 2
- Art, Art Galleries, 71, 72, 73, 75, 121, 122
- Astor Hotel, 35
- Audubon, J. J., 73
- Autograph collectors, 17, 130
- Automat, the, 44, 130, 132

- Bache Collection, 72
- Balanchine, G., 120
- Ballet, 32, 92, 120
- Barbers' shops, 89
- Barnum, 73, 115
- Bartók, 122
- Basket ball, 118, 119, 120
- Battery, the, 9
- Beauty treatment, 126, 127
- Bellevue Day Camp, 67
- Bellevue Hospital, 58, 66 *et seq.*
- Bérara, 121
- Berlin, Irving, 112
- Berman, E., 121
- Bernstein, L., 122
- Bickford's, 81
- Blood donation, 4, 5
- Blumenthal Collection, 72
- Boarding houses, 4, 88
- "Bobby-soxers", 16
- Book shops, 39
- Boucher, 75
- Bowery, the, 9, 87 *et seq.*
- Bowles, 122
- Brevoort Hotel, 35
- Bribery, corruption, 8, 57, 60
- Broadcasting, 53 *et seq.*
- Broadway, 3, 8, 80 *et seq.*, 109
- Bronx, the, 1, 2, 9, 15, 73, 84
- Brooklyn, 2, 15, 102
- Brooklyn Bridge, 131
- Brooklyn Navy Yards, 3
- Burial, 3
- Burial, Chinese, 96
- Burns, statue of, 84
- Buses, 5, 37

- Cabaret, 114
- Cabot, J. & S., 128
- Cage, J., 122
- Calder, A., 73
- Canal Street, 80, 90
- Carnegie Hall, 29, 122
- Central Park, 6, 31, 34, 35, 84
- Cézanne, 75
- Chagale, 121
- "Cheer Leaders", 119
- Chelsea, 1, 90, 93
- Chinatown, 15, 94, 95, 96
- Chinese burial, 96
- Chinese temple, 96
- Chrysler Building, 95
- Cinemas, 6, 83, 99, 100, 114, 115
- City Museum, 75
- Civics, politics, 6, 57, 106, 109
- Climate, 28, 29, 31, 32, 129
- Clothing industry, 2, 4
- Columbus Circle, 6, 14
- Columbus, statue of, 84
- Communism, 6, 106
- Concerts, 122; *see also under "Music"*
- Coney Island, 32, 33
- Convention Week, 35
- Cookery, *see under "Food"*
- Copland, 122
- Cornell, J., 121
- Cornell Medical Centre, 64, 65
- Courtship, speedy, 24
- Crane, H., 131
- Crime, 2, 58 *et seq.*, 103, 104
- "Crooners", 16, 17
- Curios, 39, 94, 95

- Dancing, 1, 6, 82, 107, 108, 114, 115, 120, 121
- Davis, S., 73
- Decimal System, 130
- Decoration, interior, 40, 72
- Delacroix, J., 80
- Delvaux, P., 121
- Denton, D., quoted, 52, 79, 128
- Divine, Father, 109
- Divorce, 24
- Drama, 73, 111, 112, 113
- Dramatic criticism, 111
- Drinks, drinking, 42, 43, 45, 46
- Drugs, 59, 63
- Drug stores, 42
- Duchamp, 75
- Dunham, K., 120, 121
- Dutch settlers, 102

East River Drive, 9
Electricity consumption, 2, 6
Electricity, static, 10, 11
Elevated Highway, 9
Elevated Railway, 5
Empire State Building, 9, 83
Employment, 3, 21
English, attitude to, 12, 13
English population, pre-war, 12
Erie railroad, 8
Ernst, M., 121
Etiquette, 25, 26
Exports, N.Y.C., 2

Ferries, 1, 7, 8
Fini, L., 121
Fitzgerald, F. S., 130
Fizdale, R., 122
Flowers, 51, 52
Food, 40 *et seq.*, 66
Food, Automat-served, 44, 130, 132
Food, dieting, 126
Food, Chinese, 95
Food, Italian, 101
Food, Spanish, 99
Fourteenth Street, 3
Fragonard, 75
Frances, E., 121
Freedman, A., 63
Frick Collection, 75
Fulton Fish Market, 1, 5

Gambling, 14, 15, 59
Garvey, M., 109
Gas consumption, 2
German Quarter, 100, 101
Gibson, C. D., 26
Gladstone Hotel, 35
Gobelin Tapestries, 72
Goethe, quoted, 128
Gold, A., 122
Gorki, A., 121
Gould, J., 8
Grand Central Terminus, 10, 34, 102
Greenwich Village, 1, 45, 93
Group Theatre, 112

Haieff, 122
Harlem, 1, 9, 102 *et seq.*
Harrison, L., 122
Hayter, 121
"Hell's Kitchen", 9, 87 *et seq.*
Herald Square, 3
Hindemith, 122
Historical Museum, 73
Historical Society, 73
Honegger, 122

Hood, R., 83
Hospitals, health services, 4, 64 *et seq.*, 110
Hospital, Bellevue, 66 *et seq.*
Hospital, Cornell, 64, 65
Hospital, New York, 64, 65
Hospital, Post Graduate, 4
Hotels, 34 *et seq.*
Hotel, Algonquin, 35
Hotel, Ambassador, 35
Hotel, Astor, 35
Hotel, Brevoort, 35
Hotel, Gladstone, 35
Hotel, Lafayette, 35
Hotel, Martha Washington, 36
Hotel, Mills, 36
Hotel, Murray Hill, 35, 90
Hotel, Plaza, 34
Hotel, St. Regis, 35
Hotel, Savoy Plaza, 35
Hotel, Waldorf-Astoria, 35
Housing shortage, 10, 15
Hugo, J., 121
Hungarian Quarter, 101
Hutton, B., 16

Ice-cream, 41
Iced drinks, 42
Imports, N.Y.C., 2
Impressionists, 73
Industry, 2, 3, 4
Irish Quarter, 93
Irish vote, 57
Italian Primitives, 72
Italian Quarter, 9, 101, 102
Ives, 122

Japanese Prints, 72
Jews, 63, 96, 97, 98
Junior League, the, 125
Justice, *see under "Crime"*

Kelley, L., 121
Kirkpatrick, R., 122

Lafayette Hotel, 35
Landowska, W., 122
Language, 17, 18, 19, 43, 49
Law, *see under "Crime"*
Lectures, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75
Lennox Avenue, 103
Leonid, 121
Lewisohn Stadium, 32
Lind, Jenny, 73
Living Art Museum, 75
Long Island, 9, 14, 78

- McDougall Alley, 94
 Madison Avenue, 27, 40
 Madison Square Garden, 115 *et seq.*
 Magazines, 50, 51
 Maiden Lane, 86
 Maitland-Griggs Collection, 72
 Manhattan, origin of, 79
 Mansfield Collection, 72
 Marlowe, S., 122
 Martha Washington Hotel, 36
 Matisse, 75, 121
 Matta, 121
 Mercury Theatre, 112
 Messaien, 122
 Metropolitan Museum, 72
 Metropolitan Opera House, 122 *et seq.*
 Milhaud, 122
 Mills Hotels, 36
 Minuit, 79
 Miro, 75, 121
 Modern Art Museum, 73
 Mondrian, 73
 Money values, 130
 Morality, 23, 24, 103, 110; *see also under*
 "Crime"
 Morgan, Pierpont, Collection, 72
 Morgan, Pierpont, Library, 75
 Morris, Gouverneur, 8
 Moses, R., Commissioner, 9, 91
 Murray Hill, 90
 Murray Hill Hotel, 35, 90
 Museums, 70 *et seq.*, 83, 93
 Museum, City, 75
 Museum, Historical, 73
 Museum, Living Art, 75
 Museum, Metropolitan, 72
 Museum, Modern Art, 73
 Museum, Natural History, 74
 Museum, Rockefeller, 73
 Museum, Science, 83
 Museum, Whitney, 93
 Music, musicians, 16, 17, 97, 102, 122
 et seq.

 Natural History Museum, 74
 Negro politics, 109
 Negro population, 102
 Negro Quarter, 1, 9, 102 *et seq.*
 Negroes, health of, 110
 Newsprint, 46

 Onderdonk, Bishop, 22, 23
 O'Neill, E., 113
 Opera, 102, 122, 123, 124; *see also under*
 "Music"

 Park Avenue, 10, 78, 83, 102, 109
 Patchen Place, 94

 Pell Street, 94
 Petrov, 121
 Photography, 104, 105, 124
 Picasso, 73
 Pigeons, 30, 31
 Planetarium, 74, 75
 Plaza Hotel, 34
 Police, 2, 58 *et seq.*, *see also under*
 "Crime"
 Politics, civics, 6, 57, 106, 109
 Pope-Hennessy, J., quoted 30
 Population, 2, 3, 12, 129
 Porter, Cole, 17, 112
 Post-Graduate Hospital, 4
 Poulene, 122
 Press, the, 46 *et seq.*, 73, 108
 Primitives, Italian, 72
 Primitives, modern, 73
 Prostitution, 24, 103, 110
 Publicity, 55, 56, 80
 Pullman trains, 20

 Queens, 1, 2, 9

 Racing, 14, 15, 26
 Radio, 53 *et seq.*
 Radio City, 83, 84, 114, 131
 Randolph, A. P., 109
 R.C.A. Building, 83, 84
 Restaurants, 44, 45; *see also under*
 "Food"
 Rice, Elmer, 79, 113
 Richmond, 2
 Rieti, 122
 Riverside Drive, 78, 91
 Rockefeller Centre, 9
 Rockefeller Museum, 73
 Rockefeller tapestries, 72
 Rose, Billy, 19
 Ruggles, 122

 Sailors' Mission, 86
 St. Leo's Church, 3
 St. Paul's Church, 85
 St. Regis Hotel, 35
 San Gennaro, Feast of, 101
 Savoy Plaza Hotel, 35
 Schneider, A., 122
 Science Museum, 83
 Scott, statue of, 84
 Seamen's Institute, 86
 Seligman, K., 121
 Shakespeare, statue of, 84
 Shaw, G. B., quoted 112
 Shipbuilding, 3
 Shopping centres, 3, 27, 39, 40, 87, 94, 95
 Sinatra, F., 16, 17
 Slang, *see under* "Language"

Social Register, 125
 Society, 125, 126
 Spanish Quarter, 9, 98, 99
 Spirito, Romolo di, 122
 Spiritualism, 69, 70
 Sport, 47, 115 *et seq.*
 Stettheimer, F., 73
 Stock Exchange, 76, 77, 78
 Stravinsky, 122
 Street signs, 11
 Subway travel, 5
 Sullivan, E., 19
 Sullivan, L., 79
 Surrealists, 73, 121
 Sutton Place, 79

 Tammany Hall, 57
 Tanguy, 121
 Tanning, D., 121
 Tarot cards, 75
 Tattooing, 89, 90
 Taxicabs, 38, 39, 60
 Tchelitchev, P., 73, 121
 Telephones, 2
 Teyte, Maggie, 122
 Theatre, the, 73, 111, 112, 113
 Third degree, 58
 Tilyou, G. C., 32
 Times Square, 2, 24
 Toscanini, 122
 Traffic lights, 8
 Tramways, 5
 Transportation, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 20, 37, 39, 60
 Triborough Bridge, 9, 14
 Tweed, W. M., 57

Union Square, 6, 14

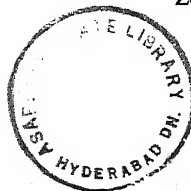
United Nations Assembly, 16

Vanderbilt, 8

Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, 35
 Walker, D., 19
 Walker, J., Mayor, 57
 Wall Street, 2, 8, 46 (*reports*), 85, 86
 Warren, W., 34
 Washington, George:
 Arch, 93
 Letters, 73
 Pew, 85
 Washington Bridge, 9
 Washington Market, 1
 Washington Square, 90, 93
 Water consumption, 2
 Water transportation, 1, 2, 7, 8
 Welch, C., 122
 Westchester, 78
 White, S., 90
 Whitney Museum, 93
 Wilde, Oscar, quoted 129
 Wilson, E., 19
 Winchell, W., 17, 108
 Wireless, 53 *et seq.*
 Wolf, Elsie de, 40
 Woolworth Building, 76
 World Wars, effects of, 15, 16
 Wrestling, 115 *et seq.*

Yorkville, 100

Zoo, the Bronx, 73
 "Zoot-suiters", 61



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